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"THE MOST COMPELLING  
EXPERIENCE OF  
THE YEAR BAR NONE"

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION 2 MAGAZINE



COMING TO XBOX AND PC  
23<sup>RD</sup> APRIL 2004



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PlayStation®2



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# HALF-LIFE 2 P32

**We've done it again! We broke the news last year, now check out our exclusive playtest of the world's most anticipated game. And yes, it's that damn good...**



## Born Again!

A year ago, almost to the day in fact, we brought you the first ever news and screenshots of a game called *Half-Life 2*. We gushed, we waxed lyrical, we gushed a bit more and then we settled down for the short wait until September 30, the date the game was due to go on sale. And we waited. And waited. And then it became obvious that something had gone horribly wrong.

Conspiracy theories flashed around the Net quicker than the Paris Hilton night-vision video, but, unlike Ms Hilton, Valve's lips remained clamped shut. Well, now they're talking again, and, as promised, we're the first mag in the UK to bring you the news the whole world has been waiting for. You see, Valve invited us over to play the game and to answer any remaining questions that you might have. And they delivered. And then some.

*Gasp!* As you read about the real reason behind the game's delay.

*Shriek!* As you gorge on the stunning new screenshots on display.

*Try desperately to keep your tongue in your mouth!* As you read about the three full levels we played through in Valve's headquarters.

Yes, the game is still looking as stunning as it was the first time we saw it, despite the fact that a certain *Far Cry* has proved that you don't need a big name to make an utterly fantastic game. But this is *Half-Life* godammit, and the fact that it's now back on track and shaping up for a summer release is the best thing we've heard all year. And that includes the news that Rick Hilton's daughter isn't as demure as you might have imagined.

Dave Woods  
Editor



## COVER DISCS P134 →

### ■ THREE EXCLUSIVE DEMOS...

The fantastic and unique sci-fi RTS, *Perimeter*, plus *Colin McRae Rally 04* (multiplayer) and a free trial of *EVE Online*. Plus single-player and multiplayer demos of *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* and *TOCA Race Driver 2*.

### ■ DVD EXCLUSIVES

An exclusive *EVE Online* gallery, *The Punic Wars: A Clash Of Two Empires*, *Black Mirror*, *Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising* and a new demo of *Painkiller*.





## FIRST LOOK

- 8 **PIRATES!**  
A SWASHBUCKLING LOOK AT SID MEIER'S NEW CREATION, ME HEARTIE
- 10 **SAHARA**  
HOT, DUSTY AND BRUTAL. WE UNVEIL NEXT YEAR'S BIG MOVIE TIE-IN

## BULLETIN

- 12 **MERCENARIES**  
LUCASARTS' CONSOLE WAR ROMP BOUND FOR THE PC? WE REVEAL ALL
- 14 **SPECIAL REPORT**  
ALL THE GOSSIP AND JUICY FACTS FROM THIS YEAR'S GDC IN SAN JOSE
- 17 **EMULATION ZONE**  
HOW TO MAKE YOUR PC RUN LIKE A PC. AND OTHER STORIES...
- 22 **UNITED ASSAULT**  
FIRST OFFERING OF THE HUGE ANTICIPATED CALL OF DUTY ADD-ON
- 25 **SEARCH FOR A GAME**  
SEFTON LOOKS STERN AS WE WEIGH UP YOUR GAMING PITCHES
- 26 **THE PC ZONE CHARTS**  
ALL THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS IN THE WORLD OF PC GAMES
- 28 **HOT SHOTS**  
FLAT OUT



UNITED ASSAULT 22

## FEATURES

- 138 **GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD**  
THE MAKING OF STRATEGY TOUR DE FORCE SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR



HALF-LIFE 2 32



SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WWI 44



STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO 54

## ONLINE ZONE

- 92 **ONLINE NEWS**  
EVERQUEST CELEBRATES ITS FIFTH YEAR ANNIVERSARY IN STYLE
- 95 **WELCOME TO MY WORLD**  
THE ALIENS HAVE LANDED IN ANARCHY ONLINE
- 96 **EVERQUEST II**  
WE TREK TO VEGAS TO GET AN EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON WITH THE BIGGEST MMOG OF THE YEAR
- 100 **SERVER BROWSERS**  
TROUBLE FINDING A GAME ONLINE? TRY ONE OF THESE HANDY UTILITIES
- 102 **FIGHT CLUB**  
WE'VE GOT BRAND NEW SERVERS! PLUS GUILDHALL, ZONE CHAT AND LAN ROVER
- 104 **BIOSFEAR**  
CAN THE KOREAN FANTASY MMOG HOLD ITS OWN? WE CHECK IT OUT
- 106 **REVIEWS**  
DARK AGE OF CAMELOT AND EVERQUEST GET NEW EXPANSIONS
- 112 **COMMUNITY CHEST**  
THE CIVILIZATION III COMMUNITY SHOWS OFF ITS WARES
- 113 **NEVERQUEST**  
STEVE HILL GETS FRISKY DOWN THERE

## HARDWARE

- 116 **HARDWARE NEWS**  
ALL THE NEWS AND RUMOURS FROM THIS YEAR'S CEBIT SHOW
- 118 **REVIEWS**  
MAKE FREE PHONECALLS ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD
- 122 **DEAR WANDY**  
PC PROBLEMS? DR WANDY IS THE MAN WITH THE KNOWLEDGE
- 124 **WATCHDOG**  
COMPANIES TAKING LIBERTIES? WE'RE HERE TO HELP...
- 126 **BUYER'S GUIDE**

## REAR VIEW

- 128 **MAILBOX**  
SHARE YOUR VIEWS HERE
- 130 **THE A-LIST**  
THE BEST GAMES IN THE BEST MAG
- 134 **DISC PAGES**
- 145 **RETROZONE**  
MEMORIES OF A MASSIVE MONKEY

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On sale June 3. And that's the way it is. Huh!



# GAMING THE SAN JOSE WAY

PART SHOW-AND-TELL, PART SOCIAL GET-TOGETHER, THE 2004 GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE DOMINATED BY MICROSOFT'S XNA – BUT THE FORMAL UNVEILING OF THE UNREAL 3.0 ENGINE STOLE THE SHOW. JON JORDAN WAS THERE...

**LIKE THE BEST** farces, the headlines arising from the Game Developers Conference were a mixture of confusion, misdirection and more than a touch of smoke and mirrors. Prior to the show, the rumour-mill had already spun into overdrive concerning Microsoft's much anticipated Xbox 2 announcement. The frenzy was heightened by the company's decision to fly in journalists from around the world for bigwigs Robbie Bach and J Allard's talk about "reaching another level of mass-market greatness".

So come 10:30am Wednesday morning, there was standing room only in the giant San Jose Civil Auditorium. Come 10:31am however, and for days thereafter, there's been the sound of nail on wood as developers scratch their heads and wonder: 'What the hell is XNA?'

## COME AGAIN?

Officially a framework encompassing and extending existing audio, networking and other miscellaneous Xbox tools for PC, Xbox 2 and mobile game development, Microsoft's spokesmen were sticking by their statement that it was a way of 'making better games faster'. So far, so vague.

"We want to ease developers' pain," explains Chris Donahue, Microsoft's lead technical evangelist for Windows gaming. So there you have it: XNA – the aspirin for developers. And aspirin was certainly what was required to deal with the conspiracy theories XNA generated during the late-night drinking sessions for which GDC has become infamous.

These ranged from 'it's a complete load of old fluff made up at the last minute', to 'it's a cunning business strategy designed to help Microsoft disengage from console games and focus on the much more lucrative PC space'. The best rumour suggested that the newly trim chief XNA evangelist J Allard had just got back from an extended snowboarding holiday, only to find he'd drawn the short straw in his absence and been asked to front the whole sorry mess.

Of course, it's currently impossible to tell if XNA actually has any effect on the quality of games. Donahue suggests the first games to show significant benefits from the technology will be targeting Xbox 2 (due in 2005) or Microsoft's Longhorn operating system (not due to at least 2006) – so don't hold your breath.



Will XNA change the world?

As for the advantages XNA will provide for PC developers, they remain to be explained. Good audio, networking and performance optimisation tools have always been available for PC developers anyhow, while the ability of the PC to mutate as new graphics cards, soundcards, CPUs and interconnect technologies become available makes it difficult to see how XNA's cross-platform features will help PC developers in the long-run. The mystery remains...

## RETURN OF THE MACK

XNA aside, GDC04 provided an excellent selection of big-name speakers discussing the issues of the day. Top of everyone's list was John Carmack's talk entitled (deep breath): 'A Candid Look At The Issues And Rewards From Bleeding-Edge Engine Development.' Giving the appearance of being as at ease with public speaking as he is delivering a dynamic lighting render path, Carmack demonstrated his laser-like concentration, spouting a stream of consciousness on the big problems currently facing developers.

Games are taking too long to develop and the push for higher-quality

## "The Unreal 3.0 demo was fantastic and showed some amazing results"

graphics is only going to increase the problems, Carmack espoused – while also admitting he's already running a prototype of NVIDIA's next NV40 graphics accelerator. But no, he didn't say he was planning to take *Quake II* art assets and plug them into the *Doom 3* engine, so *Quake II Remix* isn't on the cards. But looking ahead, Carmack reckons id's next project plans to re-use assets and core engine components from *Doom 3*, so the setting will be a present or near-future environment.

"In five years time, I have no doubt we'll have characters the quality of *The Lord Of The Rings* in computer games," he predicts. Yet Carmack also warns we shouldn't expect too much future innovation from id. "I think there are exciting things that can be done by small teams," he said. "They won't be coming from id Software because we're a prisoner of our own success. We end up doing larger and larger projects."

But when it comes to showing off cool stuff, once again it was id's arch-rivals Epic stealing the limelight. Hidden away in the



Only time will tell.



camera-proof booth, level editor Alan Willard demoed the current version of its engine, now called 'Unreal 3.0'. Using a swathe of new rendering techniques, the demo proved fantastic. Technology includes the use of 'normal maps' – now a standard technique for any FPS. Using this, Epic takes the surface detail from models consisting of 8,000,000 polygons and bakes them into a map which is then applied to a low resolution version – around 8,000 polygons – of the same model.

## UNREAL 3.0 FOR REAL

Other smarts include virtual displacement mapping, which is a similar trick applied to static objects such as walls. It provides a bumpy 3D look for flat polygons, which even react correctly to dynamic lighting, itself another engine feature. And if you want more, Unreal 3.0 also boasts a completely new physics engine, soft shadowing, procedurally-generated terrain textures as well as a dynamically tessellating outdoor rendering engine. At times, the demo was a bit like an Open University computer science course (without the tank tops) – but when the results are this amazing, who cares?

Willard claims the demo scenes consist of around 1,000,000 polygons, which have been reduced down from 200,000,000 polygons of source art. There's no news on when Epic's game is due though, although since it's merged with sister company Scion Studios, one Unreal 3.0-powered game should hopefully be out during 2005.

Back on the conference track, other top developers were getting into the spirit of GDC. Will Wright, 'Mr Sims' and the closest thing we have to a bonafide genius drew big crowds. His talk on a schizophrenic approach to game design listed some of the techniques he employs, including post-it notes, free association, stealing from others and if all else fails, asking the receptionist.

Wright also joined up with Warren Spector and Sony's Raph Koster to try and come up with a design for a romance game. Typically, Koster ended up with a MMOG chat-based game, while Wright proposed a WWII romance within *Battlefield 1942*. Spector, on the other hand, failed to complete his assignment. Instead, he preferred to analyse the problem claiming: "I'm not a blank page designer." For his efforts, he won a cheap romance novel. **[E2]**

■ For more, go to [www.gdconf.com](http://www.gdconf.com)



**FIRST  
Look!**

Pieces of eight

# PIRATES!

First screenshots & info on Sid Meier's new swashbuckling sim

■ **LANDLUBBER:** Jamie Sefton

## ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

**PUBLISHER** Atari  
**DEVELOPER** Firaxis  
**EXPECTED RELEASE DATE** Q4 2004  
**WEBSITE** www.firaxis.com

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Sid Meier's remake of his classic *Pirates!* game
- A huge 17th century Caribbean world to explore in full 3D
- Create your own unique pirate character
- Open-ended gameplay with duels, sea battles, romance and more

**HA HAAAR**, me hearties! I've always loved pirates and recently found a faded 1970s photo of me in fancy dress complete with eye patch, red 'kerchief, toy parrot and cardboard sword. A life of crime on the high seas has yet to materialise though (apart from once being hopelessly drunk on a cross-channel ferry), so I've had to make do with videogames, the most recent being the adventures of Guybrush Threepwood in LucasArts' *Monkey Island* titles.

The original 1987 *Pirates!* (the exclamation mark emphasising the panic

sailors would experience when they saw the infamous skull-and-crossbones flag) was a triumph of the time. Sid 'Civilization' Meier crafted an immersive and revolutionary cross-genre mix of RPG, strategy and action that has spawned innumerable imitators. *Pirates!* allowed you the freedom to create your own unique 17th century pirate character, who sailed the seven seas in search of adventure, buried treasure and talkative exotic birds.

"The original *Pirates!* game on the Commodore 64 holds up well even today," Sid Meier tells *PC ZONE*. "Generally, I don't like revisiting titles because I don't hold back – I put everything that's fun into a game at the time I design it. However, fans of the original have been practically begging that we remake it of late and the recent advances in technology mean we can add something new to this rich and interesting world."

## GROG, GROG, GROG!

The new *Pirates!* will keep the original's open-ended, freeform gameplay, but the storyline will be expanded, with more emphasis on romancing the governor's daughter and a greater role for regional and local politics involving trade routes and arguments between the English, Dutch, French and Spanish factions. You'll be able to choose your friends and enemies, and can change your mind at any time if that seems like a 'profitable' thing to do. The vastly-improved AI will remember whether you've been a noble or a scurvy pirate and, depending on your previous actions, will react differently in any situation.

However, the biggest change for *Pirates!* will be the use of Firaxis' Gamebryo 3D graphics engine, which will show the Caribbean as a vital, living world, complete with ships bobbing about, terrifying storms and waves lapping along shores. "Nowadays, we can make worlds that are bigger, more beautiful and more involving than ever, but it's still important to spark the imagination – maybe even more important," adds Meier.

## SPLICE THE MAINBRACE

Fans of the original *Pirates!* will be chuffed to know that the hugely-enjoyable ship battles will return with the addition of mouse-control, different types of cannon shot and camera view options. There's no multiplayer though, but Meier will be supporting the online community with downloadable content such as new character skins, flags, ship hulls and beat files for the dancing sequences. We'll shiver your timbers with a full hands-on preview of the new *Pirates!* next month. [E]

**"Today, we can make worlds that are more involving than ever, but it's still important to spark the imagination"**

**SID MEIER**  
DIRECTOR OF CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT, FIRAXIS



You'll be able to choose your pirate's allegiance and switch at any time.

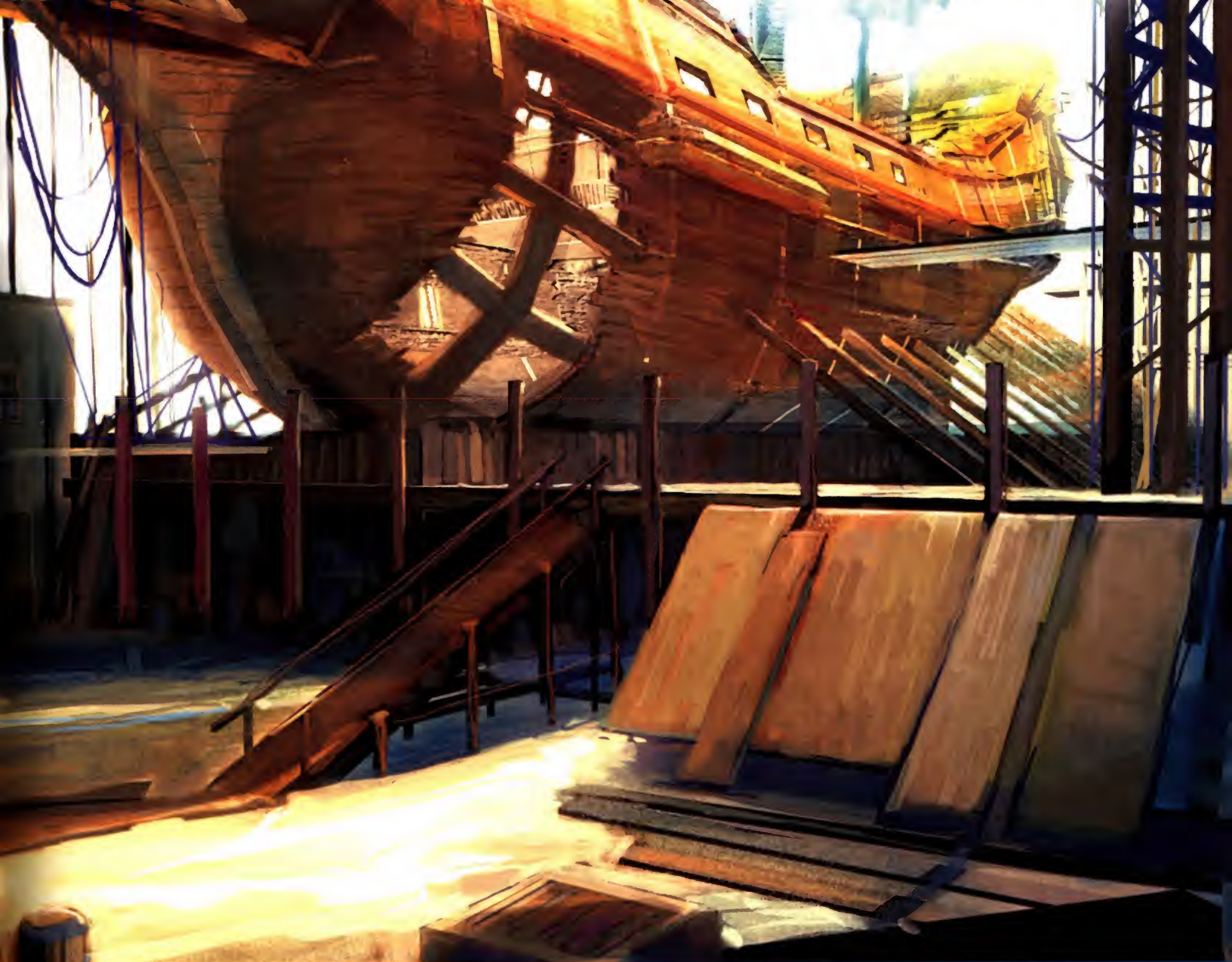


Dance your way into the heart of the governor's daughter.



Stealth gameplay now plays an important part in the prison-break sequences.





You'll want to fix that hole before you sail out onto the high seas...

#### A NEW WORLD

*Pirates!* uses the Gamebryo 3D engine for lush visuals, plus there'll also be different-looking historical periods just like the original, with the player setting a start date at the beginning of the game.

#### SOUNDS FAMILIAR

The new game features some of the original storyline, such as searching for your long-lost sister and confronting your nemesis, the evil Colonel Mendoza.

#### SHIP-TO-SHIP

The ship battles return in full 3D, as well as now giving you different cannon shot for your fleet – round for hull damage, chain for sails and grape for crew.



#### RETRO, BABY

Sid Meier has kept the old number-pad and space bar control system for duelling and sea battles, dating back to the Commodore 64! However, mouse-control is included too.

7 Chop	8 Jump	9 Swing
4 Thrust	5 Taunt	6 Parry
1 Slash	2 Duck	3 Dodge

#### NOBLE OR NASTY?

*Pirates!* enables you to decide what kind of pirate you want to be, with different special skills and nationalities available. Are you going to uphold the honour of the king or nab any ship that sails by?

#### ONLINE COMMUNITY

Although only single-player, *Pirates!* will support the online community with additional downloads of new character skins, ship models and more.



**FIRST  
Look!**

A tale in the desert...

# SAHARA

A new action hero shapes up for a good old-fashioned rumble

■ **CRUISIN' FOR A BRUISIN':** Anthony Holden

## ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

**PUBLISHER** TBA

**DEVELOPER** TKO Software

**EXPECTED RELEASE DATE** 2005

**WEBSITE** www.tko-software.com

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Based on a \$130million Hollywood film
- From the makers of *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault - Breakthrough*
- Packed with freeform brawling
- Vehicles, stealth and non-stop action

**"It could well be the game *Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb* should have been"**



**MOVE OVER** Indiana Jones. Step aside James Bond. Take a seat, that bloke from *Patriot Games*. The next big action hero is coming your way and his name is Dirk Pitt. Fans of trashy airport fiction will already be familiar with the name, being as he is the star of a string of paperbacks from mega-selling author and beard-wearer Clive Cussler. Paramount Pictures is taking great pains to make sure this guy is the next big thing, launching the character in 2005 with a 130-million dollar blockbuster called *Sahara*, starring Matthew McConaughey as Dirk.

What does this mean for us? Well, with uncharacteristic forethought, Hollywood has already enlisted a rising young development house to produce the game of the film, now revealed as a third-person title from TKO Software (recently responsible for the *Breakthrough* pack for *Medal Of Honor*). Described as an action-brawler, the game casts you as treasure-hunter and adventurer Dirk Pitt, in a rollicking tale of sunken treasure, vicious warlords and hot lady doctors.

## EARLY DOORS

The game is still at a very early stage, though from the sneaky peek given to us by TKO, it's looking very smart indeed. In fact, it could well be the game *Indiana Jones And The*

*Emperor's Tomb* should have been, with more action, more variety and a far more capable engine. The technology in question has been built from the ground up by TKO, with a lovely little proprietary physics engine that matches Havok ragdoll for ragdoll.



The barrels, the planks, the crates - all are potential weapons.

The core gameplay device is a kind of no-holds-barred brawling that the developers are calling 'improvisational combat'. Essentially, this enables you to pick up any object and use it to batter someone else, even if it means throwing it at them. Fire extinguishers, TVs, car tyres, table legs - if it's not nailed down, you can cave someone's skull in with it.

What's more, you'll often be up against an entire roomful of combatants, so you won't be able to simply batter your way through blindly. Techniques such as human shields, throwing people through tables and keeping enemies at bay with long weapons will all be vital to getting through in one piece. The developer describes this as 'crowd control', a

concept it's hoping will add a level of sophistication to the open scrapping.

The game also offers basic stealth elements, as well as the odd bit of zippy vehicular action, as Dirk takes command of high-tech boats, a train and an unusual wind-powered sandsurfer. It all promises to be fast-paced stuff, and we're confident TKO will make a decent fist of it.

In fact, from our brief meeting with the team, it was clear that these guys have seriously got their shit together. They've just about finished the multiplayer side of *Medal Of Honor: Pacific Assault*, and have recently attracted talent from Ion Storm, Turbine and Bungie. We can't help but think we'll be hearing a lot more from TKO very soon... [E]



Visit exotic locations such as Mos Eisley spaceport.



"Hold still a sec, you've got an eyelash."





Bosh! Dirk Pitt's favourite dinner party trick is to throw guests through the table, then take to their heads with a splintered table leg.

#### FADE IN THE SHADE

Rather than having specific stealth missions, there'll be an option to use stealth wherever you deem it appropriate – though subtle pointers like stark shadows and oblique light will indicate where it might be applied.

#### USE OF WEAPONS

The game's physics engine was custom-built with improvisational brawling in mind. As such, you can pick up any loose object in the game and use it as a weapon – even bits of the furniture you've just smashed.

#### BAD EGGS

The developers isn't making any grand claims about the level of enemy AI – it's just there to be beaten up after all – but baddies will be smart enough to respond to stealth triggers such as sound, moving shadows and so on.

#### EXOTIC LOCALES

The game will follow the plot of the film closely, starting in Nigeria and moving into warlord-controlled areas of Mali. Along the way you'll slip through a Malian army depot, run a river blockade, save a village from an evil warlord and storm a toxic waste facility.

#### PITT, DIRK PITT

The lead character is treasure-hunter and adventurer Dirk Pitt, though you'll occasionally switch to playing his sidekick Al Giordino. Dirk is described as Indiana Jones with a dash of James Bond and MacGyver. Needless to say, we'll be the judges of that.

#### COMBO TIME

The brawling action is built around fairly basic rhythmic button combos. "There'll be a couple more complicated moves but we want the button-mashers to be able to have a good time," states TKO founder Jake Hawley.







ALL THE NEWS, VIEWS AND RUMOURS FROM THE WORLD OF PC GAMING

# BULLETIN

## KNOW YOUR ENEMY



■ NEWS WRITER Will Porter

▲ The Suit has spoken. The games you love don't sell and the future has been painted in the colour Sim. There is no hope, no innovation, we'll settle for nothing now and we'll sure as hell settle for nothing later. The PC's future lies in the franchise, the mindless shooter and the money-spinners.

Bullshit. If they think they're going to take my games away from me, they'll do it over my dead body. Or at least they'll do it over my very angry, living body. I'm making a stand. Last month I was whining because *Sam & Max* had their freelance police licence cruelly revoked, this month I got angry. I want to tell LucasArts about the way I'm feeling, the way you're feeling. So I urge you to write, email or text your anger to me – I'll remove the swear words and fire them off in a blaze of fury and balanced judgement.

I'm a realist: I don't think that we'll get *Sam & Max* back – that ship has now sailed. But together, as a united front of geeks, gamers and the general public, we'll get our voices heard and we'll take the power back. Next time a mighty publishing corporation holds the Sword of Damocles above the head of a much-loved game that no longer accommodates current 'market place realities', they might just remember our tiny little voices and think a little harder.

The adventure is not dead (Revolution is working on a follow-up to the classic *Beneath A Steel Sky*, page 19). Innovation is in the same place as it always was (*Rag Doll Kung Fu*, page 22). And, as you can see from the game on my right, LucasArts still has the ability to make good games.

The revolution is coming. How long? Not long. But remember: what we reap depends on what we sow...



Great on-foot action, the ability to steal tanks and large explosions. This could be great.

## GRAND THEFT ARMAGEDDON

HAVE A GANDER AT *MERCENARIES* – THE LUCASARTS WAR ZONE ACTIONER THAT'S SET TO GIVE TOMMY VERCETTI A RUN FOR HIS MONEY

**IN SECRET** development for two years, and fresh evidence of the happy relationship between LucasArts and the boys at Pandemic (who are also working on *Star Wars: Battlefront*), *Mercenaries* is set to dominate the console market and consequently, and more importantly, wreak havoc on the PC – the platform that we feel is its rightful home.

When you see the incredible new 3D engine that powers this secret little puppy, you'll understand why *Mercs* is much more than a run-of-the-mill shooter. Oh yes dear reader, it's got the lot. Freeform non-linear play, a varied set of missions based around a version of the Iraq conflict's 52 most-wanted playing cards, deformable terrain, third-person run-and-gun combat and drivable vehicles. It's also got a slightly unnerving near-future setting that sees North Korea undergoing political upheaval, as Chinese and UN forces race across the frontier to secure the stash of WMDs that might otherwise fall into the hands of the criminal underworld – and we all know what would happen then, don't we?

### KOREA CHANGE

If you're still unconvinced, consider the fact that *Mercenaries* is, as the developers are happy to admit, something of a homage to the unstoppable *Grand Theft Auto*. Swap

the Hawaiian shirt for combat fatigues, baseball bat for a full arsenal of machine guns and rocket launchers, and laundry vans for assault choppers and you've got yourself what can only be described as one of the most exciting military action games since *Operation Flashpoint*. (It's also a game that's sure to be more accessible too, what with LucasArts at the helm).

**“Raid a humanitarian convoy for instance, and sell the bread for – ahem – dough”**

You play the titular soldier of fortune and your aim isn't to save the West – not if you don't want to – but to earn a stack of cash working for the highest bidder. Play ball with the UN forces for too long and the Chinese might not look the other way next time you steam through one of their roadblocks. Consequently, sniffing about for secret documents on behalf of the Commies and the UN might not want to favour you with their high-tech weapons. Or why not do

some dirty work for the Russian mafia? Raid a humanitarian convoy for instance, and sell the bread for – ahem – dough.

### SECRET SERVICE

OK, so it may end up lacking the dark humour of the *GTA* series, but to see someone take such a successful concept and transfer it to a current real-world setting doesn't just make good business sense, it should provide for a cracking game. The only shell casing in the ointment is that *Mercenaries* has only been announced as a console release, although we have it on good authority that if sales are brisk (as they should be), us PC chaps can expect our own tailor-made version with high-res graphics, mouse control and first-person paraphernalia. Having seen the console version in action, we have no doubt that Pandemic is going to be quids in – and with *GTA: San Andreas* only just peeking over the horizon, PC *Mercenaries* looks like a mighty tasty prospect indeed. But, shhhh, keep it under your hats – it's not 'official' yet.

■ Publisher: Activision  
■ Developer: Pandemic/LucasArts  
■ ETA: Console versions are out this autumn, so early 2005 seems reasonable  
■ Website: [www.lucasarts.com](http://www.lucasarts.com)





**SPECIAL REPORT**  
Gossip from the GDC



**EMULATION ZONE**  
PC emulation for the PC!



**INDIE ZONE**  
Indie games reviewed and rated



**PC ZONE CHARTS**  
Latest charts and release dates



It could have been magical. And violent.



We'll never know who the hell this guy is...



# All dogs go to heaven

THE MYSTERY VORTEX SPITS OUT WHAT REMAINS OF SAM & MAX

**SCREENS OF** the recently scuppered *Sam & Max* sequel have surfaced, and don't they just make you want to cry? As we reported last month, the psychotic duo's creator Steve Purcell has gone on record calling the decision to cull the LucasArts furry contingent "mystifying", since the game was "on schedule and coming on beautifully".

Meanwhile righteous geek anger has been roused, with 21,716 names (at the time of writing) on a petition that the

outraged can find at [www.petitiononline.com](http://www.petitiononline.com). Elsewhere bods at [www.savesammax.com](http://www.savesammax.com) are threatening to protest outside the LA Convention Centre while LucasArts is hawking its goods at E3 – something *ZONE* applauds. In battles like this, every little helps.

It's a dog-eat-dog world, and even if one of the dogs wears a tie and hates country music it seems he won't escape the marketing men's guillotine. Rest in peace. We won't forget you.

**YOUR Shout!**

Are you narked at Sam & Max's demise? Let us know and we'll let LucasArts know.

**SEND YOUR VIEWS!**

First off, sign the petition. Then send us letters, emails, faxes and telegrams... We'll collate them, be them up with a pretty pink ribbon and send 'em over to the Ranch. The people will have spoken. Email us at [letters@pczone.co.uk](mailto:letters@pczone.co.uk). Send letters to *ZONE*, HQ, 9 Dallingdon Street, London, EC1V 0BQ.

**TEXT YOUR OUTRAGE!**

Would you have been interested in buying a 3D *Sam & Max* adventure? Let's find out if the LucasArts money men were wrong after all. Send the keyword "PGZCHAT" to 83125, followed by your name and compact musing. Messages sent to PC *ZONE* cost 50p plus your standard operator (text messaging) charge. For full terms and conditions, see page 7.



You'll never have to fork out for Alton Towers again.

## PLAY PARK



Well it's a far cry from the Cobra Mk II.

ELITE CREATOR DAVID BRABEN UNVEILS ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3

Another PC stalwart is being dragged kicking and screaming into the realm of 3D, and this time *RCT* main man Chris Sawyer has enlisted the help of David Braben and his band of merry men at Frontier Developments.

"A 3D engine improves the way rides are built, but the real benefits are beyond that," explains David, commenting on an engine that'll enable you to view your parks from any angle and ride your monstrous creations with the in-game 'Coaster-Cam'. "But perhaps the most surprising change,

even to us, is the way the virtual people will draw you into the game. We've made a change from the 'peeps' of *RCT* to proper 3D people: all different ages, sexes, races and clothing. This in turn has brought in many gameplay benefits with it.

"Groups of teenagers will also come into the park, as will couples. This will affect the rides they choose to go on, as they'll tend to go on rides together." So teenagers will gravitate towards extreme rides, families will go on slowpoke merry-go-rounds (if the

group AI hasn't already made the kids run off, that is).

With a raft of new ride ideas, it's clear that Braben's efforts will add to the *Tycoon* canon. The wise among you should also brace yourself for the slew of expansion packs that must, surely, be queuing up behind it.

■ Publisher: Atari  
■ Developer: Frontier Developments  
■ ETA: Christmas 2004  
■ Website: [uk.atari.com](http://uk.atari.com)



**"I don't think we care about E3 anymore and may never go again."**

George Broussard, the man behind vapour-ware-incarnate production

Duke Nukem Forever won't be swigging cocktails with the PC *ZONE* boys come May.

**"Competitions are also being run across the media, including the chance to win a home pole-dancing podium."**

Deep Silver's press campaign for sim-shagging simulator *Singles: Flirt Up Your Life*. Along with the furry handcuffs and bondage tape also on offer, one lucky gamer's girlfriend is in for one hell of a surprise.

**"The patch fixes problems with the client spawning as a building on the map."**

Breed's first patch gets down to the basics.

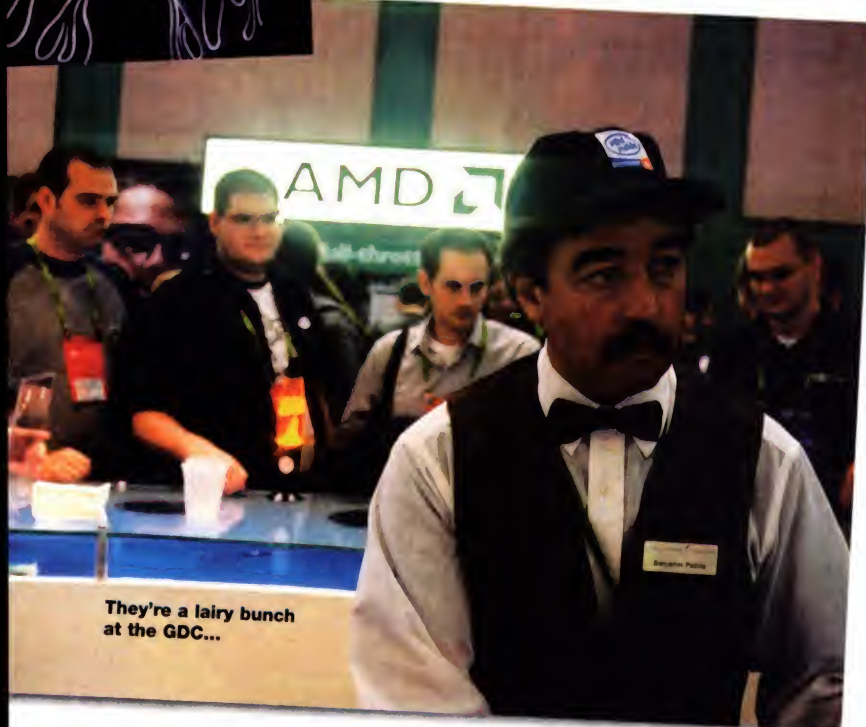


## 10 BEST GDC 2004 MOMENTS

- 1 The conspiracy theories about XNA - cooked up on the back of a fag pack, it can even make developers cups of tea. Allegedly.
- 2 Ed Fries, who two months ago headed up Microsoft's games division, being turned away from its VIP enclosure.
- 3 One UK developer explaining that when he gave his XNA soundbite, he didn't have a clue what it meant.
- 4 John Carmack's speech - an eloquent dissection of game development challenges. All that, and he's planning low Earth orbit too.
- 5 Will Wright's bizarre minute timeout discussing the robustness of the Russian space programme.
- 6 Grim Fandango creator Tim Schafer explaining why his use of Friendsters (the US Friends Reunited) for the forthcoming Psychonauts was the most fun he's had in years.
- 7 EA head honcho Bing Gordon's claim that if a game doesn't sell, it's because it isn't creative enough.
- 8 Two members of a well-known UK studio having a stand-up row in a crowded late-night hotel bar.
- 9 More Will Wright: his final trick when stuck on a game design problem? Ask the receptionist!
- 10 Warren Spector's abject failure and subsequent public shame after failing to come up with a romance game design.

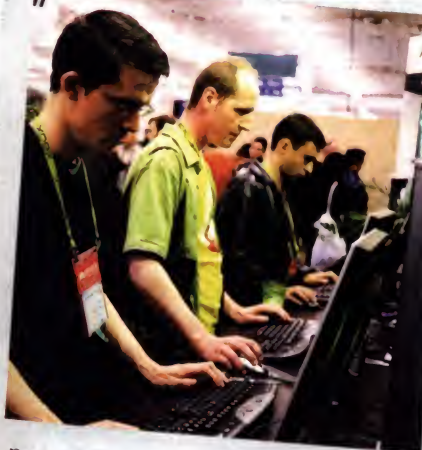


John Carmack in full flow, although his massive brain is presumably analysing his planned Meen landing. Or similar.



They're a lairy bunch at the GDC...

**"It's currently impossible to tell if XNA has any effect on the quality of games"**



Cool demos available at GDC included Serious Sam 2 and an exclusive AMD-friendly 64-bit Far Cry level.



3 Allard, Microsoft's Xbox guru, came to GDC to explain how XNA will save game developers from everything they fear.



Go to the Expo show floor and get given useless glowing plastic objects. Great, but where's the free beer?





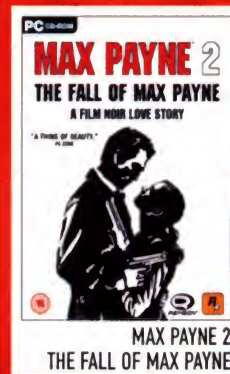
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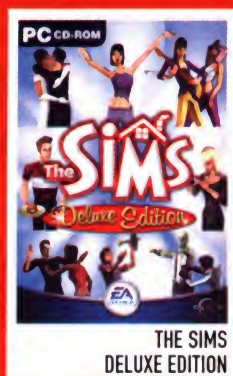
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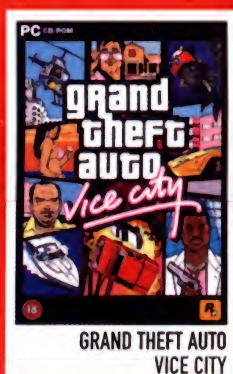


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# EMULATION ZONE

BREAKING NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF EMULATION, WITH RETRO REANIMATOR STUART CAMPBELL



Relive the DOS glory years...

## BACK TO YOUR ROOTS

**THE PC'S** a funny old thing. Designed to be the world's first backwards-compatible computing protocol, the entire reason the PC outlasted machines like the Apple 2, the Sinclair QL and the Amiga was that you didn't – theoretically – have to throw the whole machine away and buy or learn an entirely new one every time technology took a couple of steps forward. Of course, the way things have progressed

in the world of PCs, it's actually a lot cheaper and a lot less trouble to do exactly that these days – as Emu Zone can confirm from its own experiences this month – but that's not really the point.

Of course, the other great thing about the PC is that in the miracle age of emulation, your humble beige box is capable of being just about every other piece of home-computing hardware ever invented. From the ZX81 to the Oric Atmos to the Nintendo Gamecube, there's almost no games-capable machine that your PC isn't capable of accurately impersonating. Except one, that is: your old PC.

Yep, in one of those towering ironies that demonstrate beyond any measure of doubt the rank incompetence of pretty much everyone everywhere, the only thing your fancy new 'backwards-

**EMU**  
ARCHIVE AT  
[WWW.EXCELLENTCONTENT.COM/EMUZONE](http://WWW.EXCELLENTCONTENT.COM/EMUZONE)

## EMULATION OF THE MONTH

TURBO OUTRUN (US GOLD/SEGA 1990)



Not sure which part of the race this is.

We covered the original *OutRun* in Emu Zone issue 139, but the *Turbo* sequel to it is one of the great lost coin-ops: still not emulated in any arcade emu, largely written out of history and the recipient of some pretty shoddy home ports (not least the awful Mega Drive one).

*Turbo OutRun* was actually a really smart sequel. It shifted the location to a trans-America race and added tweaks like the turbo-boost of the title, the ability to upgrade your car and the fact that if you drove poorly, the famous passenger-seat blonde would walk out on you between stages and zoom off

with one of your rivals instead (complete with a display of little love-hearts just to rub it in). Oddly enough, just about the least terrible home version of *Turbo OutRun* was the DOS PC one, and fortuitously, it's one of the games fully supported by DOSBox. By 1990, the PC was finally starting to catch up to the graphical standards of other home machines, and this is a colourful, smooth-running rendition of the arcade game with all the main features intact.

Someday, someone will crack the encryption of the arcade version – until then, this keeps the *Turbo* flame alive.

compatible', all-emulating PC can't run to save its life is your collection of old PC games. It's all Microsoft's fault, naturally. First, it's so shriekingly paranoid that PC owners might use the DOS interface to do something non-Microsoft-approved with their machine; and second, it's so terminally useless at writing an operating system capable of coping with a little bit of user tinkering, that it seems to have managed at a stroke (specifically the stroke from Windows 98 to Win XP) to obliterate the core functionality behind the whole invention of the PC. Bless Microsoft.

But enough of this editorialising – what's it all got to do with Emu Zone, you fat idiot? The answer is that the tirelessly-cunning emulation community has come up with a solution to the problem, and the solution is this – a PC emulator for the PC!

DOSBox has been around for ages (and shouldn't be confused with another similar but rubbish program called, er, DOSBox). It's basically an MS-DOS emulator, which enables your fancy Windows PC to act like a clunky old 486. It's simple to use – you just install your old DOS game as normal, then drag-and-drop the install folder onto the DOSBox executable. You then get a

command-line window and can navigate the folder like it was an old MS-DOS hard drive. Ah, happy days.

In truth, DOSBox still isn't all that compatible, but it does run a lot of games: from the PC's earliest attempts at arcade conversions to violently Windows-hostile games like the famous *Pinball Dreams* series. For that alone, it's worth keeping a close eye on. [X]

### LINKS

[dosbox.sourceforge.net/](http://dosbox.sourceforge.net/) – DOSBox homepage, including compatibility lists

### WHAT IS EMULATION?



By installing an emulator, you can run games that were programmed for different platforms – such as coin-ops – in their original form. The games come in the form of a ROM (Read Only Memory) that you load into the emulator to run. There are legal issues though, and unless you own the original game, it's often against the law to download a ROM. For that reason, we can't give you links to ROMs, though we can give you links to the emulators themselves.



The immortal *Pinball Fantasies*.



# THE MAN WHO KNOWS

**BOFFINS HAVE** invented a computer game that can be controlled using the **power of the mind**. The terrifying creation, dubbed **Mind Balance**, uses a **wireless headset** to pick up brainwave patterns using **special electrodes**. Two boxes transmit flashing images into the player's brain at different speeds, and by looking at them in turn a frog-like character known only as **Mawg** is forced to walk across a tightrope. Should Mawg start falling to the left, concentrating on the box on the right will correct his stance, preventing him from plummeting to a **tragic death**. Eggheads believe that gamers could be sporting the special headsets within a matter of years. Mawg has yet to break his silence.

The **Chinese Government** has banned Codemasters' **IGI 2: Covert Strike** after it was deemed that it "damages national dignity and interests," according to the official state Xinhua news. Apparently, officials took offence at the game's content, which portrays China as a **rogue state** that must be stripped of weapons technology lest it embark on a murderous spree of death and destruction. An expert said: "I don't know about that, but I do like those big chips they do..."

**Sega** and its employment agency **Spherion** have given **\$600,000** to 13 Filipino games testers in an **out-of-court settlement** following allegations that they were dismissed on grounds of national origin. One of the fired testers, **Beejay Enriquez**, raged: "They think they could just throw us away because there's a whole world out there full of people who want to become testers. They say: 'Oh, we can pull another 16-year-old off the street' - they think **all testers are socially misaligned**, dumb, that all they do is sit in a dark room all day playing videogames - no intelligence." Well if the backwards baseball cap fits...

Finally, **Internet rumours** suggest that erstwhile Happy Mondays frontman **Shaun Ryder** will provide the voice of a character in **Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas**. The laconic lyrical genius cum drug-addled waster would appear ideal for the part of a 22-year-old white male from Manchester called Maccor. If they can get him off the pipe, that is.

**"All testers are socially misaligned, dumb and sit in a dark room all day playing videogames"**

# BACK ON DUTY

THE FIGHT FOR EUROPE CONTINUES  
AS GRAY MATTER REVEALS **CALL OF DUTY: UNITED OFFENSIVE**



Flames will be thrown.



Scintillating scripting will abound.

**AS DAY FOLLOWS** night and Michael Jackson follows ice-cream vans, so a mission pack follows a chart-topping shooter. In this case, however, the inevitability is thoroughly welcome, as Activision has revealed details of *United Offensive*, the first expansion pack for the brutally brilliant *Call Of Duty*.

The add-on pack, which is being handled by *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* veterans Gray Matter,



promises both single- and multiplayer content, taking us to such WWII settings

as the Battle of Kursk, the Battle of the Bulge and the invasion of Sicily. "We're featuring an all-new single-player campaign where you play as the Americans, British, and Russians," says Robb Alvey, senior producer at Gray Matter.

"There'll be over ten new levels, as well as new weapons and abilities including a flamethrower and

the ability to cook-off grenades." No huge surprises there, but Gray Matter is also planning a multiplayer tank combat mode - something the original game really cried out for.

The technology behind the game will remain largely untouched, though we're assured that Gray Matter has done wonders with the effects system, improving explosions and adding a range of weather effects. This last is particularly intriguing. The air in *Call Of Duty* was already thick with bullets, mortar shells, flying debris and the cries of the dying. Throw in lashing rain and snow and you've got one hell of a harrowing atmosphere on your hands. "We've got a great vision for what we can accomplish with *United Offensive*," agrees Rob. "Fans will definitely want to heed the call again."

- **Publisher:** Activision
- **Developer:** Gray Matter Interactive/Infinity Ward
- **ETA:** Autumn 2004
- **Website:** [www.callofduty.com](http://www.callofduty.com)

# Patriot Games

MACHIAVELLIAN EMPIRE-REARING IN **RISE OF NATIONS** ADD-ON

**RISE OF NATIONS**, already proof-positive that history would have turned out better if it had been granted a 'try again' button, is about to be nipped, tucked and extended by the *Thrones And Patriots* expansion pack.

There'll be six new nations to play with, so world history can be directed in six new directions: American, Dutch, Indian, Iroquois, Lakota or Persian. There'll also be the obligatory new units (20 at the last count), a smattering of new Wonders of the World such as Hanging Gardens, Red Forts and Forbidden Cities, and a variety of smaller-scale gameplay tweaks.

Four new Conquer The World campaigns, meanwhile, are set to feature the Cold War, the colonisation of America (where you can choose to play as one of many foreign powers or as Native Americans) and also provide two starring roles from legendary Macedonian good-time boy Alexander the Great and Napoleon Bonaparte - the star of 1989's *Bill And Ted's Excellent Adventure*. All of which should make strat-fans quite content for a fair while.

- **Publisher:** Big Huge Games
- **Developer:** Microsoft ■ **ETA:** April/May
- **Website:** [www.microsoft.com/games/thronesandpatriots/](http://www.microsoft.com/games/thronesandpatriots/)



One nation rising, another falling quite spectacularly.



# Mean Streets

RED CARPET ROLLED OUT FOR PC OWNERS IN *TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA*



Patience, Daniel-San...

**THE GAME** that would be *GTA* is waiting in the wings for its big PC premiere, and for once we're happy to report that the port from console hasn't been governed by the standard cutting and pasting routine: this time we're actually getting a better product.

The game follows former LAPD cop Nick Kang as he brings crooks to justice around LA – shooting, driving, cuffing and practising kung fu on passing hoodlums wherever he roams. The PC version's extra niceties will include more firepower in the form of rocket launchers and crossbows, 30 extra hard-rawk and metal songs (added to the pre-existing hip-hop mix of Snoop Dogg, Eazy E and Ice Cube) and a variety of collectible



Weren't you in *Starsky & Hutch*?

skins from other Activision titles – such as Jeanette from *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines* and Officer Dick from the *Tony Hawk* series.

Prime position in the extra features, however, is given to the five new multiplayer modes. These include fisticuff-generators Dojo Master and Battle Master, motor-thrashing street racing and a mode known as The Beat, in which up to four players run around trying to clock up more arrests than each other. American police officers beating people up in the City Of Angels? Whoever would have thought it?

■ Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: Luxoflux ■ ETA: May 28  
■ Website: [www.activision.com/microsite/truecrime](http://www.activision.com/microsite/truecrime)



Another EasyJet flight ruined.



"Wow. This guy's really well hung."

# GEARBOX SHOWS GRIT

UBISOFT POUNCES ON WWII SQUAD-BASED SHOOTER *BROTHERS IN ARMS*

**DETAILS TRICKLING OUT** of Gearbox recently became an average-sized gush. The buzz surrounds Ubisoft, who picked up the reins of the realism-ingrained shooter variously known as *Baker's Dozen* and *War Story* – now the first part of the *Brothers In Arms* franchise.

Based on a true story, *Brothers In Arms* promises a brutal treatment of the trials and bullet-ridden tribulations of one Sgt Matt Baker. Playing as this D-Day paratrooper squad leader, you'll be re-living real history left, right and centre – with battlefields conjured onto your monitor via aerial photography, military records, contemporary photos and eye-witness accounts. The game promises to be uncensored and packed with emotion, so you can expect substantial amounts of effing and blinding as well as unsanitised, bloody combat.

Randy Pitchford, head of *Halo*-porters and *Half-Life* fiddlers Gearbox, is promising "an authentic story, a fresh gameplay design and the ultimate WWII combat experience". Even though promises of the 'ultimate WWII combat experience' are pretty common these days, these screens are making us more than willing to believe him. We'll corner Randy next month at E3 to get the full scoop. LA here we come!

■ Publisher: Ubisoft ■ Developer: Gearbox  
■ ETA: TBA ■ Website: [www.warstory.net](http://www.warstory.net)



So could this be the game to outcall *Call Of Duty*?



Note the blur effect on the sights. Nice.



Red sky at night, soldiers will fight.

## SHORTS



### MIRROR CRACK'D

If you like your spine tingled by good old-fashioned point-and-clickers, you'll be well catered for in *Black Mirror*, a trapeze around various spooky cemeteries, asylums and large dark rooms. Full review next issue, and the demo's on the DVD should you fancy it.



### STEELEIER SKY

Revolution Studios, the guys behind the legendary *Broken Sword* series, has confirmed that it's working on a sequel to 1994's adventuring classic *Beneath A Steel Sky*. Although it's in extremely early stages of development, we're still excited.



# IndieZone

## Dragging the world of underground developers kicking and screaming into the limelight

**AS MENTIONED IN** Free Play a couple of issues back, one of the odd things about progress in gaming – and more specifically, gaming technology – is how certain things get completely left behind. It's like never having another cup of tea in your life just because you've discovered beer.

Modern graphics cards can display incredible textures, lighting, detail and all the rest of it, but the advent of CGI in movies didn't stop people making cartoons, did it? The fact that odd French feelgood movies

(say, *Amélie*) can be made in glorious real-life technicolour doesn't mean that muted-tones animation isn't still a valid alternative way to express similar sentiments (as in, say, *Belleville Rendez-vous*).

Major publishers generally lack the vision to create games with anything but the latest technical state of the art, but Indies are free to try more eclectic or abstract styles, ironically displaying a considerably greater level of artistic maturity by doing so. Indie Zone looks at a couple of examples...

### FREE PLAY

## rRootage

(ABA Games)

**ON THE CD** **ON THE DVD** **SUPERFICIALLY** reminiscent of the mighty *Warning Forever* (from the first ever Free Play column), this abstract shoot 'em up is a very different game in play, and marks the pinnacle of a series of games in a similar vein from Japanese shoot 'em up coder Saba. As you can see, the graphics are extremely minimalist, but they conceal a highly sophisticated shooter which includes stripped-down versions of three of the most popular arcade/console shooters of recent years: *Giga Wing*, *Psyvariar* and *Ikaruga*. *rRootage* takes the weaponry, enemies and fire patterns of those three games and transposes them into its own wireframe world, in the form of ten individual levels for each mode, played as score attacks. (There's also a ten-level original mode.)

It's shooting in the purest form imaginable. In the four game modes, there's a surprisingly wide variety of playing styles, from the reflect-shield-based *Giga Wing* levels to the *Psyvariar* ones, where you get more bonuses and firepower the closer you scrape against the enemy bullets. While the graphics couldn't be any simpler, they have a real beauty of their own – and while it only partially comes across in screenshots, you now have no excuse for not admiring it in action.



I think you've got him worried.



A trouble shared is a trouble halved.

## PLATYPUS

**ON THE CD** **ON THE DVD** **\$19.99 (£11) | Dev: Retro64 | Out Now |**  
[www.retro64.com](http://www.retro64.com)

**REQUIRES** PII 300, 32MB RAM and an 8MB 3D card **DESIRES** That ought to do it really

### Stuart Campbell discovers plasticine power

**THE AUTHOR OF** *Platypus* apparently modelled every single object in the game in plasticine before photographing them and turning the pics into sprites – and this attention to detail has really paid off in this uniquely good-looking shooter. Indie Zone isn't really sure why more games haven't used this distinctive and time-honoured technique (hey, if it's good enough for *Wallace And Gromit*, it should be good enough for PC games). However, this is good news for *Platypus*, as it means it gets to stand out from the crowd in a way that it perhaps wouldn't if it relied on standard-type graphics to depict its shooting action.

This is real old-fashioned stuff, with none of the fancy gameplay fripperies of *rRootage* (left). You get a few basic time-limited power-ups, a raft of baddies and some massive boss enemies at the end of each stage – and that's about it. But it's beautifully executed and with an admirably challenging difficulty setting, both in terms of the resistance put up by the little Claymation bad guys themselves and in the fact that you only get a couple of credits to play through each of the five long stages (each with several sub-levels). In truth, the stages are slightly too long and a bit repetitive until you reach the splendid bosses, but marvelling at the graphics (even the explosions are rendered in plasticine) will keep you distracted from that fact for a while.

As a bog-standard space shooter, you probably wouldn't give *Platypus* a second glance – but its playschool-stylings are so loveable, it's a bargain at the price. Check out the demo on our cover discs.



Not the safest way to transport mines.

**PCZONE VERDICT 74**

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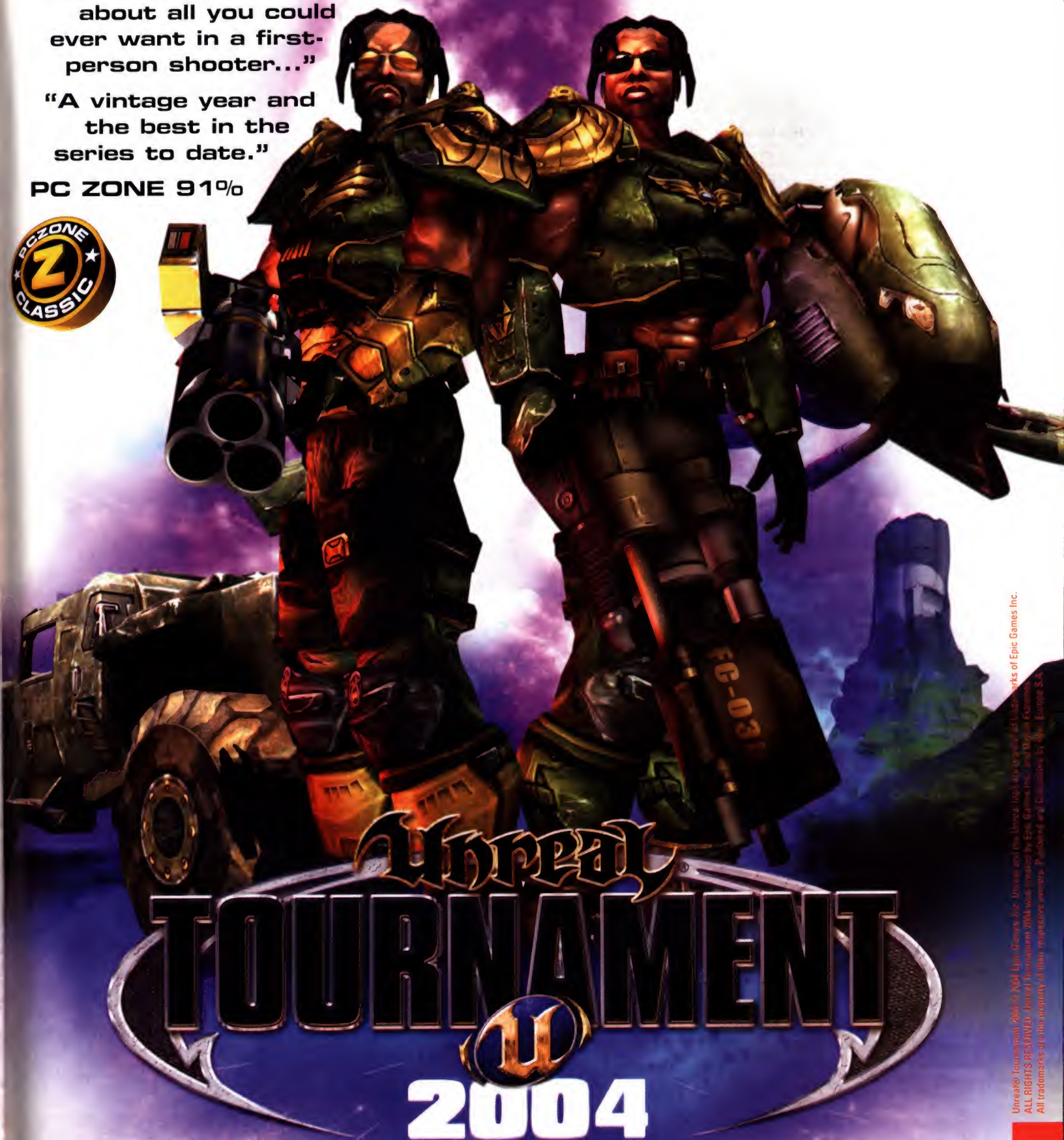


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ATARI





Ken Levine  
General manager and creative director  
at Irrational Games

## DEVELOPERS' QUESTION TIME

### What PC games are you playing at the moment?

*Space Empires: StarFury*. And biding my time until *Rise of Nations: Thrones And Patriots* comes out.

### What was the last videogame you finished?

The last game I finished as a gamer would be the excellent *Beyond Good & Evil*.

### What's your favourite game of all time?

*X-Com*, *Civilization 3*, *Rise Of Nations*. I'm a strategy whore – but that doesn't mean games like *TimeSplitters 2*, *Zelda*, *Halo* and *Beyond Good & Evil* don't suck up an insane amount of time.

### What are you most proud of in your career?

Probably a tie between our employees, our track record, the characters in *Freedom Force* and our fans.

### Who do you most admire in the industry and why?

I really admire the little guys who're doing hardcore strategy games.

### What has the PC contributed most to videogaming?

The two biggest things, in my opinion, are online play and modding. These two things extend the life of games exponentially.

### What's your company's philosophy?

Let the players decide what's fun. You can't always force people to enjoy themselves. All you can do is give them the tools to do so and turn them loose in the world.

### What's the best thing about your job?

Knowing people are playing our games.

### What's the worst thing about your job?

The business side. It's a necessary evil, but sometimes I look out of my office at the guys building the games full-time like a kid stuck inside while the others are playing. But I do get to do a fair amount of development, so it all balances out.

### What are you working on at the moment?

I'm doing a lot of story work on *Freedom Force Vs. The Third Reich* and *Tribes: Vengeance* – I'm really pleased with the way both are shaping up. We're also planning our next games.

### What's going to be the Next Big Thing in PC gaming?

Niche titles being sold directly to the gamers online, I'd say.

# MEDIEVAL MALARKEY IN 3D!

## FIFTH SETTLERS GAME USES A NEW ANGLE

**THE INEVITABLE** announcement of a new *Settlers* title is like taxes, daybreak and the seasonal reappearance of the Argos catalogue: they absolutely will not stop. Ever. Until we are all dead.

The fifth incarnation, however, looks like being a point of interest – mainly because the traditional isometric viewpoint has turned 3D and looks, dare we say it, really rather fetching. Returning you to a familiar medieval setting, your plucky settlers will be padding down on territory previously stolen from them by a nasty tyrant – who presumably won't be overly keen on giving you a quiet life.

New features and detailed animations are promised for the new epistle – although German developer Blue Byte has said that it'll do its darndest to keep the original style and ambience of the original titles. Farms will be farmed, mines will be mined, settlers will be settled. In 3D!

■ Publisher: Ubisoft  
■ Developer: Blue Byte  
■ ETA: Q3 2004  
■ Website: [www.thesettlers.com](http://www.thesettlers.com)



Looks a lot nicer than before, doesn't it?



Check out the ice reflections...



Soldiers out to spoil your settling.

# RAG DOLL RUMBLE

## LIONHEAD MAN REVEALS ONLINE RAG DOLL KUNG FU MADNESS



Static: good. Moving: bloody hilarious.



When Andy Pandy met Mister Miyagi.

**MARK HEALEY**, a Lionhead artist currently working on Xbox title *Fable*, has set the Net on fire with his quirky personal side-project *Rag Doll Kung Fu*.

"Me and some friends decided to make a short kung fu film, just for some laughs," explains Mark. "We had a budget of £50, some really bad fake bald heads, a severed ear and hand, some smoke bombs and a blow-up doll. I particularly loved the way the doll's limbs would bend the wrong way. It seemed like a natural progression to make a game to go with it."

Essentially an online fight with string puppets, you control your drunken master by clicking fists and dragging limbs – when you want him to walk you literally have to pick up his feet and place them in front of one another. "Fighting is merely a last resort," Mark adds. "You can chat, dance, make love, pretty much anything you can imagine. Remember, there are no pre-scripted animations, it's really down to you – so you and some friends could have a breakdancing competition, or act out some Shakespeare if you like."

Gaming icon Peter Molyneux is also keen on linking it to Lionhead Studios – he's responsible for a tiny routine in the game too. An online demo should (hopefully) be ready by the summer, before the game proper is available for a small fee. Check out the mad movie on our DVD for confirmation of its grooviness.

■ Publisher: N/A  
■ Developer: Mark Healey  
■ ETA: Summer  
■ Website: [www.ragdolkungfu.com](http://www.ragdolkungfu.com)



# Also known as...

JENNIFER GARNER SNEAKS AND LOOKS ALL SEXY IN ALIAS

**IT LOOKS** like console, smells like console and plays like console, but the tie-in for *Alias* isn't looking as shabby as the cynics among us might have thought. We've had our hands on it, and what with all the cast members providing voices, the convoluted plotting and the skimpy outfits on offer, most *Alias* fans should be well catered for.

The level that ZONE played featured Sydney Bristow dressing up as a Vegas waitress and drugging a nefarious villain's underling – before discovering a huge underground lair beneath her feet and wreaking havoc. Nice touches we noticed on

our run-through were the improvised weaponry we picked up (bottles, hammers, frying pans and the like), along with the constant murmur of your back-up team whispering into your ear – which made us feel like a real grown-up spy.

The full game will have Syd cavorting as a Tokyo geisha, a Romanian psychiatric doctor and a lingerie-clad gangster's moll – so the sexually frustrated can rejoice. We'll get down to the nitty-gritty in next month's review – until then you'll just have to work your way through the DVD box-set.



She's a girl. But she isn't rubbish.

- Publisher: Acclaim
- Developer: Acclaim Studios Cheltenham
- ETA: May/June
- Website: [www.aliasgame.com](http://www.aliasgame.com)



Jennifer Garner and booze. Our dream combination.



As in the series, abortive sneaking ends in fisticuffs.

## Good Cop. Bad Cop.



### GOOD COP

Martin flying out to Valve to get all the latest on *Half-Life 2* – and it looks great! Woohoo!

The doughnuts that turned up for Jack magazine that we ate instead. They were nice.

Prez going up a level in *Dark Ages Of Camelot*, causing much rejoicing, revelry and merriment.

Steve Hill going partying on the Mos Eisley set in Tunisia, and stealing a bit of pod-racer for the boys back home.

### BAD COP

Steve O'Hagan getting too big for his boots – jetting out to Morocco and eating sheep's testicles with Orlando Bloom.

Prez becoming a sad shambles of a man while his wife was away in Japan. Late starts, frozen sandwiches and debauched shenanigans in Las Vegas. The shame.

An evil man using the ladies lavatory and leaving a mess. Suzy's going to catch the bastard some day and kill him.

Good Cop: **RoboCop** (né Alex Murphy) Bad Cop: **Cain Robot** (both from *RoboCop 2*) – suggested by Tom Prior in Kenilworth. Send in your ideas for next month's Good Cop and Bad Cop to win a PC ZONE goodie bag!

## COMPETITION

# WIN STUFF WITH KILL SWITCH!

THREE LOVELY, SHINY ATI GRAPHICS CARDS AND FIVE COPIES OF KILL SWITCH UP FOR GRABS!

**FIRST PRIZE** A top-of-the-range ATI 9800XT graphics card

**SECOND PRIZE** Two rather fantastic ATI 9600 Pro cards

**RUNNERS-UP PRIZES** Five copies of smart shooter *kill.switch*

We reviewed engaging arcade combat shooter *kill.switch* back in issue 140. Now publisher Hip Games has coughed up some rather tasty graphics cards for some lucky, lucky winners: graphics cards that'll run next-gen titles like *Half-Life 2* with consummate ease, no less.

But if you don't get a postman shoving a ATI 9800XT or a ATI 9600 Pro card through your mailbox, don't worry. There are copies of *kill.switch* up for grabs too for five lucky runners-up!

To be in with a shot, all you need to do is answer the following question. If you think you're smart enough, that is.

**Question:** Which famous 'brothers' oversaw the PC port of *kill.switch*?

**A: Super Mario Brothers**  
**B: The Bitmap Brothers**  
**C: The Chuckle Brothers**

Send your informed and clever answers on the back of a postcard to the following address:

kill.switch competition  
PC ZONE  
Dennis Publishing  
9 Dallington Street  
London  
EC1V 0BQ

### WIN BY TXT!

Alternatively you can now enter with a text from one of those new-fangled mobile devices. To enter the competition, text 'PCZSWITCH', to 83125, with your answer (a,b or c), plus your full name and address.

All text entries must be received by June 2. Messages will cost 50p plus your standard operator text messaging charge. For full terms and conditions see page 7.

■ Terms and conditions: only entries with the question completed and received before the closing date will be entered into the prize draw. Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. Multiple entries not allowed. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply – see page 7.





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# Search For a Game

Got the greatest game idea since *Doom*? Come and put it to the ultimate test – PC ZONE's Search For A Game...



"Welcome back game-creation fans! Despite last month's effort failing to excite our panel, the entries are still flooding in from all you budding Spectors, Molyneuxs and Hassabis-es-to-be.

Braving the panel this month is Andrew "Call me Dave" Peters from Bolton, with a promising little effort he's put together – a boyhood tale of cowboys and indians for modern gamers. Andrew/Dave calls this little number...

## "Morrowind meets A Fistful Of Dollars"

## FRONTIER

**IMAGINE** a totally open-ended game set in the Wild West where you can be anything from a Native American tribesman to a sheriff or an outlaw, even choosing exactly what you wear or what horse you ride. The style of gaming will be mostly RPG but, in the style of *Deus Ex*, will have elements of a first person shooter. This gives you the chance to re-enact the classic saloon shootouts, duels and even up to the level of skirmishes between two factions, fighting for land and so on.

If the entire world is encompassed say, in a network of valleys, it will be able to include settlements, maybe one or two major towns, rocky hilly areas, vast flowing rivers and rolling landscapes and prairies. This should provide a wide range of interesting landscapes to explore and create (if a map editor is also designed for the consumer).

Much like in *Morrowind*, if every aspect of the character generation and development is left to the user, even down to detailed inventories and trading goods, it

would lead to a hugely varied and involving world. This may inspire people to play the game several times, just to see what a whole different playing style is like.

The opportunities for multiplayer gamers are limitless. Like most MMORPGs, clan systems feature heavily and *Frontier* can house these, clans being a band of outlaws, a Sioux tribe or even the sheriff and his men, fighting one another for supremacy over Internet maps. Let's just hope not everyone opts for a Clintesque lone ranger type.



Clans take the form of gangs like this posse from *Tombstone*.



*Outlaws*: the last good western game.



Not everyone can be Clint...



Imagine *Morrowind* in the Wild West.



"I really like this. I've always loved cowboy settings – I remember *Gunfight* on the Spectrum, an isometric sheriff thing. I think this could be really good, sort of *Dances With Morrowind*. The fact you can be a tribesman or sheriff is really cool – you could send out a wire to gather up the posse at set times, all riding off into the sunset. You could have missions and things too, but the online side would be very exciting as well. A lot would depend on the implementation and there's not much that's been done like this – I'm excited by it." **Verdict: HIT!**

"We need more RPGs not set in fantasy worlds and this is a setting that would appeal to a lot of people. You could get an old licence, probably even 'Fistful' and call it that. *Frontier* is a bit rubbish. But yeah, I think this is a winner. It would also work as a MMORPG. You need to work on the multiplayer side – whether it's a persistent world or deathmatch cowboys and indians. It's a simple idea, taking existing film and game genres and putting them together. It's worked before and I can't see why it wouldn't work again here." **Verdict: HIT!**



"I think it's an absolutely brilliant idea. No-one's made a decent western since *Outlaws* from LucasArts. It's an unexplored territory and there's so much potential there – buying and riding horses, action shootouts. I like the idea of being able to create your own character *Morrowind*-style too, although everyone will want to be Clint Eastwood. That's about the only problem, that everyone would want to be a moody bastard. The clan system is a genius idea. It's not going to be an all-out action game, more *Morrowind* or even *Stalker*. More of a thinker's game." **Verdict: HIT!**

"Nice work Andrew/Dave! A fine idea, well thought out and one that struck a chord with our judges. Let's hope there's a publisher listening. We'll be back next month with yet another entry!"

Send your ideas in no more than 300 words (along with a one-line pitch and any artwork) to 'Search For A Game' at the usual address. If any publishers like the sound of anything here, email us at [letters@pczone.co.uk](mailto:letters@pczone.co.uk). (Well, you never know...)





# CHARTS

In association with **VIRGIN MEGASTORES**

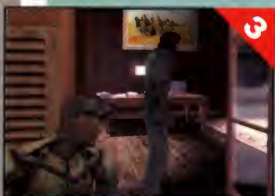
Have the British public taken our advice or prolonged their strange *Sims*-addled buying habits? Join us as we delve into the murky world of PC games...

ChartTrack

## TOP 10



In at number one is the Trigen-baiting, sun-bathing wonder that is *Far Cry*. The long wait for Freeman has been made somehow sweeter by the heroics of Jack Carver, and everyone (with a powerful enough rig) should sample their own brand of beach life.



Sam Fisher, sneaky-man extraordinaire, gets out his night-vision goggles and dangles above the charts at number three. The usual *Splinter Cell* thrills abound and, with a multiplayer contingent that's almost worth the price of entrance alone, it's worth a look.

	TITLE	PUBLISHER	SCORE
1 NEW	<b>FAR CRY</b>	UBISOFT	93%
2 NEW	BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM	EA	87%
3 NEW	SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW	UBISOFT	89%
4 NEW	COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO	VU GAMES	83%
5 NEW	UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004	ATARI	91%
6 ▼	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: SEASON 03/04	EIDOS	90%
7 ▼	THE SIMS	EA	86%
8 ▼	THE SIMS: MAKIN' MAGIC	EA	55%
9 NEW	PRO RUGBY MANAGER 2004	DIGITAL JESTERS	60%
10 ▼	CALL OF DUTY	ACTIVISION	94%

### YOUR SHOUT

Have your say at [www.pczone.co.uk](http://www.pczone.co.uk)

I'm stunned *Far Cry* is at number one. Not just because it's nice to see the best game on the market in its rightful place, but because there's that many people with shit-kickin' turbo-bastard PCs!

PeachFUZZ

FIVE. FIVE. *UT2004* is at number FIVE? What is this? Everyone go out and buy it and play it on the ZONE servers. NOW. As a side note, nice to see that *The Sims* dominance is on the slide.

Gowerty

Wahey! A proper game at number one. Now let's just hope that we don't see *Far Cry: Makin' Magic* in the charts next month.

JoeyJoJoJnr



Every morning, we think we're gonna wake up in the jungle – invariably because we were playing *BF Vietnam* till 3am. A welcome revamp rather than a true sequel, but people are learning in their thousands that flying by Huey is the *only* way to travel.



The saga comes to an end – finally. It looks dated, it should have been here nine months ago and it's had more developers than hot dinners – but it's a lot better for it. The bots are smart, the challenges fulfilling and *De Dust* never loses its charms.



megastores

## TOP 10

1.	SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW	UBISOFT
2.	FAR CRY	UBISOFT
3.	COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO	VU GAMES
4.	UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004	ATARI
5.	PRO RUGBY MANAGER 2004	DIGITAL JESTERS
6.	BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM	EA
7.	X2: THE THREAT	DEEP SILVER
8.	CRICKET 2004	EA
9.	DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR	EIDOS
10.	MEDAL OF HONOR: WAR CHEST	EA

## COMPETITION



megastores

### Win £100 of Virgin vouchers!

PC ZONE and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win 100 shiny pounds-worth of goodies from your local Virgin Megastore. All you have to do to enter is answer the following:

**QUESTION: What's the name of Jack Carver's sexy accomplice in *Far Cry*?**

Send your answers on a postcard to:

PC ZONE Chart Compo Issue 142, Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London, EC1V 0BQ. Closing date: June 2, 2004

- Please include your name, address, daytime phone number, email address, job title and company name (and age if under 18).
- Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.
- Please indicate whether you are a current subscriber to PC ZONE.

For general competition terms and conditions, turn to page 7.



# INCOMING!

PC ZONE'S RELEASE SCHEDULE FOR THE COMING MONTHS. THESE ARE ALL APPROXIMATE MONTHLY DATES, CORRECT AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS

## MAY

CSI 2: DARK MOTIVES	UBISOFT
HITMAN: CONTRACTS	EIDOS
MANHUNT	ROCKSTAR
PERIMETER	CODEMASTERS
TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA	ACTIVISION
UEFA EURO 2004	EA

## JUNE

EASTSIDE HOCKEY MANAGER: FRANCHISE EDITION	SEGA
HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN	EA
JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING	NOVALOGIC
MASHED	EMPIRE
THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS	EIDOS
SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67	EIDOS
SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WORLD WAR II	CODEMASTERS
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SNOOKER 2004	CODEMASTERS

## JULY

GROUND CONTROL II: OPERATION EXODUS	VU GAMES
SPIDER-MAN: THE MOVIE 2	ACTIVISION
WARLORDS: BATTLECRY III	ENLIGHT

## Q3

CALL OF DUTY: UNITED OFFENSIVE	ACTIVISION
CITY OF HEROES	NCSOFT
CODENAME: PANZERS	CDV
CONFLICT: VIETNAM	SCI
DRAGON EMPIRES	CODEMASTERS
DRIV3R	ATARI
EVERQUEST II	UBISOFT
FLATOUT	EMPIRE
JUICED	ACCLAIM
LEISURE SUIT LARRY: MAGNA CUM LAUDE	VU GAMES
LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH	EA
MEDAL OF HONOR: PACIFIC ASSAULT	EA
RICHARD BURNS RALLY	SCI
ROME: TOTAL WAR	ACTIVISION
THE SIMS 2	EA
STALKER: SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL	THQ
STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT	ACTIVISION
WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR	THQ
WARTIME COMMAND: BATTLE FOR EUROPE 1939-45	CODEMASTERS

## Q4

ADVENT RISING	VU GAMES
BLACK & WHITE 2	EA
BLOODRAYNE 2	VU GAMES
COSSACKS II: NAPOLEONIC WAR	CDV
EVIL GENIUS	VU GAMES
FAHRENHEIT	VU GAMES
FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005	SEGA
ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3	ATARI
THE MATRIX ONLINE	TBC
THE MOVIES	ACTIVISION
MIDDLE-EARTH ONLINE	VU GAMES
SID MEIER'S PIRATES	ATARI
STARSHIP TROOPERS	EMPIRE
STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO	ACTIVISION
TRIBES: VENGEANCE	VU GAMES

## REST OF 2004

DOOM 3	ACTIVISION
DUNGEON SIEGE 2	MICROSOFT
HALF-LIFE 2	VU GAMES
SOLDNER - SECRET WARS	BIG BEN
VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE - BLOODLINES	ACTIVISION
WARHAMMER ONLINE	SEGA
WORLD OF WARCRAFT	VU GAMES

# MISSING IN ACTION!

The war's not over until the last game comes home...

## SWAT: URBAN JUSTICE

WE told you about the whispers a while ago – and now we can confirm it. SWAT has been quietly swept under the carpet and thoroughly disposed of. No-one will be bringing any urban law-breakers to justice in the foreseeable future. Apart from the London Met, obviously, who do a great job.

- Publisher: VU Games
- Developer: Sierra Studios
- ETA: KIA



## BLACK9



IT'S STILL on the VU release schedule, but word is that the hi-tech action RPG *Black9* has hit the skids, with game designers Taldren saying development has been put on hold. Originally scheduled for 2003, it isn't clear how deep *Black9* has dug itself. We'll wait and see.

- Publisher: VU Games
- Developer: Taldren
- ETA: On hold
- Website: [www.black-9.com](http://www.black-9.com)

## CODENAME: PANZERS

CDV'S tank strategy game was expected to come rolling through our doors around now, but somewhere along the line its tracks must've been blown off. A fair bit of unwelcome competition from the Codie's realism-bound strategy epic *Wartime Command* will now be produced from its new release date of September 24.

- Publisher: CDV
- Developer: Stormregion
- ETA: September 24th
- Website: [www.stormregion.com](http://www.stormregion.com)



# US TOP 10

1. BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM	EA
2. UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004	ATARI
3. UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004 SPECIAL EDITION	ATARI
4. CALL OF DUTY	ACTIVISION
5. ZOO TYCOON: COMPLETE COLLECTION	MICROSOFT
6. THE SIMS: DELUXE	EA
7. AGE OF MYTHOLOGY	MICROSOFT
8. MVP BASEBALL 2004	EA
9. MS FLIGHT SIM 2004	MICROSOFT
10. HOYLE CASINO 2004	VU GAMES





# FLAT OUT

The game that's set to send fenders, dashboards, exhaust pipes and fluffy dice flying...

**EVERY SHOOTER** and its dog seems to be getting a physics engine tacked onto it these days, but the race for gravitational greatness is about to launch itself into the realm of the motor with Bugbear's *FlatOut*.

With realistic damage modelling and obstacles that just cry out to be prodded, knocked over, crashed into and rolled around the level, *FlatOut*'s brand of *Destruction Derby*-style banger racing looks highly promising indeed. There's none of your straight-laced *Colin McRae* nonsense here: just eight cars knocking seven shades of engine oil out of each other in one of 15 different eminently destructible environments – be it muddy forest or stadium-bound stunt track.

With each track containing over 2,000 dynamic objects for you to shunt around (including tyres, JCBs, stacks of wood, poorly built shacks, fences and your opponents themselves), it's quite apparent that the goal here isn't just winning races, but also how creative and amusing you can be when nobbling your opponents. More as it happens...

- Publisher: Empire Interactive
- Developer: Bugbear Entertainment
- ETA: September 2004
- Website: [www.bugbear.fi](http://www.bugbear.fi)









## SERIOUS WEAPONS

Wage war with enough modern weaponry for serious devastation. Deliver a deadly long range blast with a shoulder fired Stinger missile, or fight up close with the M4 rifle with optional M203 grenade launcher.

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Computerandvideogames.com (February 2004)

"We're calling this a winner... Epic in scale, glorious in foresight, and superlative in technology - its a hit"

PC Format (March 2004)

"It's beautifully conceived, atmospheric and hugely entertaining, and should be an equally huge hit"

PC Zone (February 2004)

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CV

VALVE

## VALVE SOFTWARE

Here's a few games you may have heard about before...

**1998** *Half-Life* is released to mass critical acclaim and goes on to win more awards than a famous actor playing a simpton in a big budget movie.

**1999** *Half-Life: Opposing Force*, *Half-Life's* excellent first expansion pack sees you returning to Black Mesa as colonel Adrian Shepherd.

**2000** After reaching fevered popularity as a downloadable mod, Valve invites the *Counter-Strike* development team to join its roster of talent and complete the game in partnership with them.

**2001** *Half-Life: Blue Shift* proves a huge anticlimax. With only two hours of gameplay and a hugely disappointing ending, rumours that the development team spent more time surfing than they did coding are hard to disbelieve.

**2004** *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero* is finally released after its original, massively disappointing single-player campaign is remade entirely.

## THE DETAILS

**DEVELOPER** Valve Software

**PUBLISHER** VCD Games

**WEBSITE** [www.valvesoftware.com](http://www.valvesoftware.com)

**ETA** Summer 2005

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's supposed to be just a sequel and is supposed to be
- The best physics system yet seen in a FPS
- Full face expressions and body movement from characters
- Incredible AI
- Gorgeous graphics
- Intriguing storyline



New screenshots and info –  
all exclusive to **PC ZONE!**

# HALF-LIFE 2

We broke the news of its existence to the world last year, now **Martin Korda** travels to Valve Studios in Seattle to get the very latest info on the world's most eagerly awaited FPS...

LAST  
PREVIEWED  
PCZONE  
ISSUE  
137

**IT'S HARD** to believe that it's been a year since *Half-Life 2* was announced, but finally, after months of silence from developer Valve after part of the game was stolen by opportunist hackers late last year, we've been invited back to Seattle to play the latest version of the game. You may well have got sick of waiting for *HL2* to appear – perhaps the release of *Far Cry* has satiated your lust for a ground-breaking shooter. But as you're about to find out, there's just as much reason to be excited now as there was 12 months ago.

Before we start though, if you haven't been following the *Half-Life 2* saga, you might like to refresh your memory about what we already know about the game. After all, it's been a long time since any new facts have been available, so if that's you, why not head off to the 'Beginners Start Here' panel on page 35 and swot up before you dive into the new stuff below.

But if you can't wait to jump straight in, why not join me now at Valve's offices, along with the company's managing director Gabe Newell and director of marketing Doug Lombardi as we glean the latest info and playtest the game first-hand. Excited? Me too.

## TOURING CITY 17

"We're going to let you play through three levels," begins Doug. "This first one's about 15 minutes into the game, and will give you some classic *Half-Life* gameplay, where we'll try and scare you and give you a good look at City 17." The hard disk chatter ceases and the level fills the screen. We're in.

I'm standing in a large hallway. On the far side of the enclosure hangs an enormous screen, from which gazes a kindly yet slightly sinister male face.

I pause, hoping to garner some vital information before I rush out of the inviting doorway to my left and into the bustling courtyard beyond. This man seems to be providing some kind of information service. I listen intently.

He's reading from a letter in which the author is outlining his concerns about a lack of human freedom. "Don't worry," begins his reply. "You're being treated like this for your own good. You're not ready to make your own decisions yet. But soon you will be free to do as you please."

Confused, I scan the room and spy gas mask-wearing guards blocking every doorway bar one. "Do not be afraid," continues the amplified voice, as I approach one of the guards. Before I'm even a metre away, his gun is out of its holster and pointing at my head. "Move away!" booms his bellowed warning, causing me to reel back and run for the doorway, his torrent of threats still assaulting my eardrums.

Gabe interjects. "As a character, the last thing you remember is having a conversation with the G-Man. Now it's ten years later and all sorts of things have happened. But you don't know what happened to that time or even what side you're on. As you're about to find out, everyone seems to know more about you than you do."

## UNFAMILIAR FACES

The sunlight makes me blink violently as my eyes focus on the new vista before me. All around, people walk with bowed heads, dressed in matching white clothes as circular drones buzz around the square, and more gas mask-clad guards stand around menacingly, ever watchful. "Hey, don't I know you?" comes a question from a passing pedestrian. "Haven't I seen you somewhere before?" asks another. Gabe was right: how do these people know who I am?

A commotion at the far side of the courtyard from behind a partially closed door distracts my attention. I can't quite see in properly, but it looks as though some of the town's denizens are being brutalised by guards. The sentry shoos me away with a wave of his stun-baton and I reluctantly move on.

In the distance, a 90ft Strider (a giant three-legged war machine) stalks by. I turn to a woman standing next to me and attempt to engage her in conversation. "Quiet, they may hear us," she threatens, hurriedly moving away. But my attention is snapped away by an electric drone that appears as if from nowhere and begins photographing me. Something tells me this isn't the local paparazzi.

## CITY SUBTEXT

Finally, I round a corner and enter a playground, where I push the realistic swings and rock the lifelike see-saws. "I was the last guy to play in that playground," comes the sad lamentation of a young man nearby. He's right, no children play here. The stark reality of this



early level is clear. There's no joy in this city, just a sense of terror and oppression.

"At the start of the game, you're trying to reconnect with your friends," begins Gabe, as the level ends. "You find out that some of them are still alive. You don't know why you're there or what agenda the G-Man has for you, but later on you learn a lot more about the G-Man and who he really is. You'll have a relationship with him that follows logically from the conversation that you had at the end of *Half-Life*."

I ask Gabe the significance of basing City 17 in Eastern Europe. "When we were thinking about the setting and about the conflict between humans and aliens and you and the other human antagonist, we thought that Eastern Europe would make an interesting setting. It signifies the collisions between the old and the new.

"It seemed evocative to us with its old and new architecture and the positives and negatives associated with the transformations from socialist to capitalist economies. We hope that people will get that. To us, the region is an interesting metaphor, and we hope it helps the player, either consciously or not, to understand some of what we want them to think about while they're playing."

I press Gabe to tell me a little more about the game's other

locations. "*Half-Life 2* won't only be set in City 17. You won't be leaving the planet though, or going to Xen, but we'll be bringing pieces of Xen to earth. A lot of the gameplay will take place either in City 17, or in the areas between City 17 and certain other destinations." And what of this human antagonist that he mentioned earlier? "We wanted the antagonist to be interesting, someone who was reasonable. Most bad guys in games are usually really stupid; they're the thing with the most ammo or the heaviest armour. We wanted to create a plausible opponent, and for you to beat them because you're a better scientist than they are."

#### CHARACTER BUILDING

Yet no quality story is complete without the protagonist growing in some way too, becoming a better or different person by the plot's climax. Will we see Gordon take this journey? "Gordon must become what a heroic scientist should be. But in order to be heroic, there are certain things that he's going to need to do. So yes, there will be a transformation that he's going to go through." Will the antagonist be the G-Man? Perhaps it'll be Dr. Breen—which Doug informs me is the name of the man on the giant TV screen. Perhaps someone we haven't even seen yet?

**"Most bad guys in games are stupid: we wanted ours to be a plausible opponent"**

GABE NEWELL  
MD, VALVE





## BEGINNERS START HERE



### THE STORY SO FAR...

We've already given you all the basics on *Half-Life 2* and we've got so much that's new to talk about, we don't want to rehash too much of the old. However, if you want to know – and because we're nice – we'll sum

up briefly what's been before right here in this little box.

As with the original, you once again play as Gordon Freeman, the ginger speccy scientist from Black Mesa, who's allied here with a female inventor called Alyx – daughter of Dr Eli Vance from *Half-Life*. Featuring one of the most incredible physics systems ever devised, every object in *HL2* can be manipulated.

AI will react to your actions, rather than being driven by scripts and each character features realistic musculature to make them look and move like real people. Also, each one can convincingly deliver facial emotions – 35 in all – and lip-syncing is perfect thanks to cutting-edge new technology. The story will be set in Eastern Europe in a place called City 17 and sees alien forces coming to Earth in far greater numbers than in *Half-Life*, with 50 different enemy types promised.



**SQUAD: FOLLOWING**

AMMO

42

120

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As we already know, the female inventor Alyx is another major player in *Half-Life 2*, so I ask Gabe to elaborate on her background a little more. "Her father is one of the few people who's survived from Black Mesa, and Alyx represents the hybrid between the old and the new. She helps you understand about the changes in the world, which have also affected her and what it means to live in this world. She's got lots of connections to the past, but she's much more aggressive and revolutionary than her parents were. She's going to help you go from being a loner to a champion. She'll also help you understand who all the new characters are."

### TOMB RAIDERS

Time to experience more of the game. This time, it's a night-time level, a mad dash through an alien-infested graveyard with a gung-ho orthodox monk called Father Grigory. It's a somewhat simplistic level to say the least, and feels more like a training mission than one of the stunning set pieces we've witnessed in previous demonstrations. Wave after wave of zombies shamble towards us, as the mad monk and I hurtle through the level. Conveniently placed saw blades allow me to make full use of the all-new Manipulator weapon – with which you can

pick up and propel almost any object in the game.

The blades fly through the air and scythe off the zombies' hideous noggins, as we stumble across some even more conveniently placed exploding barrels. I fire at them and a bone-bending shockwave rocks me back as I watch dismembered enemies fly across the cemetery like rag dolls in a hurricane, their still twitching bodies engulfed in flames. Other zombies walk over their fallen comrades and ignite as they pass, flailing wildly from pain and kindling more of their companions.

I wheel around suddenly and come face to face with four zombies instinctively I reel back, pumping the shotgun trigger but firing ineffectually over their heads. Seeing my predicament, Grigory dives in front of me and dishes out some punishment, saving me from almost certain death.

"In some levels, we've put obvious things like those saw blades in on purpose, so that people can easily work out and learn what they can do with the Manipulator," reassures Doug.

### LENGTH DOES COUNT

Which leads us nicely onto the game's physics system, which is promising to furnish you with a wealth of new

## A HEAD OF STEAM

### WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM VALVE'S ONLINE SOFTWARE DELIVERY SYSTEM?

For the past two years, Valve has been working on an online system of software delivery called Steam, which also acts as a games server for its multiplayer games. It's been long suggested that you'll be able to buy *HL2* via Steam, as well as from your local retailer, something that Gabe Newell confirmed on our visit. However, with Steam subscribers promised exclusive new content for *HL2* for their \$9.99 (£5.50) monthly fee, I asked what you could expect to get for your money?

"We've spent so much time building this engine, meaning we can now easily build more games and new creatures," begins Gabe. "Our hope is that some people will be getting this new content from a subscription basis, while others will be buying à la carte over Steam or in retail stores. Some of the content will be continuations of *HL2* – like Alyx's back-story – and new multiplayer games. Of course, we're also creating *Team Fortress 2* (see 'Looking Forward' on page 41), and Steam subscribers would automatically get it as part of their subscription."

gameplay possibilities never before seen in a shooter, and ensure that *Half-Life 2* will be anything but short-lived. In fact, Gabe and Doug believe that *HL2* could well prove to be twice the length of its predecessor thanks to the depth offered by the Source engine's revolutionary new abilities.

"We've seen so many different types of playing styles. Some people want to explore and try everything, especially with the new physics system, while others just want to charge through the game as fast as possible. We've actually found that

we've had greater problems with the more experienced players, who don't seem to be able to grasp the fact that everything in the game is a physical object," says Doug.

Gabe picks up the thread. "You can learn from the AI though, so you may see them doing something you didn't know you could do and then use that later on to your advantage. Now if you see a dumosier, you can pick it up and throw it at the enemy if you want to. Also, the enemies are a lot smarter and more entertaining than in *Half-Life*. They can think about physics and use them

## Why Don't You?...

### LOCK AND LOAD

Perhaps Valve just didn't show me many of the new weapons, but from what I saw it would appear that *Half-Life 2*'s arsenal of weaponry is uncannily similar to the original. Apart from the Manipulator and a meaty alien machine gun, there's a rocket launcher, pistol, MP5, shotgun, colt, various grenades and of course, a crowbar. But why not inject some more crazy alien or prototype human weapons into the mix to give the game even more punch than it's already promising? If they already exist Valve, ignore me. If not, is there still time to get them in?







This should dislodge you.

**"You may see the AI doing things you didn't know you could do and use that later to your advantage"**

**GABE NEWELL**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR, VALVE

without using this system, but if you take more direct control of the people around you during combat, it's there to be used."

#### WHO'S A CLEVER BOY?

But will we see the same kind of individuality and autonomy as we did from the bots in Valve's other recent project, *Condition Zero*, who, depending on their psychological makeup, would follow your orders to varying degrees?

"Sure," chimes Gabe. "They'll argue with you too. So if you tell someone to go and defend a certain area, they can turn around to you and say that they don't want to, as there could be a lot of risk associated with that action. They'll wait till you're not looking and then go off and do their own thing."

And so we move on to the final level of this day, one that may have a ring of familiarity if you've seen all of the *Half-Life 2* movies we've run on our discs over the past year. "In this third level,



There'll be over 50 enemy types for you to kill. Here's one of them.

purposefully. This means they can move objects to get somewhere new, or try and hurt you by causing physical chain reactions with the scenery."

Having seen a basic demonstration of working with a team-mate in the previewed level, I ask Gabe about HL2's AI mechanics, especially in regards to some of the larger battles we've seen in the past

between Gordon and allied AI troops and the alien invaders. "There's a lot of information available to the AI, like where they're looking, what their health is and what they're in proximity to. We've spent a long time looking at the AI players' motions and tried to have them generate the kind of ideas and reactions that are consistent with yours. So if you're moving

towards something, the AI will assume you have an intention. If you're trying to get into an elevator while under fire, the AI will try and do something sensible around those actions, like covering you, so that you feel that you're still driving the action. There are also some specific commands you can issue to the AI. You can play the whole genre



we're actually using the new technology to drive new types of gameplay," explains Doug as I dive in.

There's a buggy right next to me with a mounted machine gun, and the nearest thing of interest – a dry dock – is a long way off. Smoothly, I slide into the vehicle and accelerate across the bumpy terrain, the frail car bucking like a wild bull beneath me. I fight for control, barely avoiding a spin as I round a corner only to embarrassingly wade straight into a lake. The engine cuts out. I've lost the buggy for sure and a long trek lies ahead of me.

## PLUGGING THE LEAKS

**VALVE'S MD GABE NEWELL SPEAKS ABOUT LAST YEAR'S SOURCE ENGINE THEFT AND ITS EFFECT ON THE GAME AND THE COMPANY**

"It was a little bit hard to know how to react," begins Gabe melancholically. "The idea of having something that you're not entirely done with thrown out to the world is pretty traumatic and the morale of the team was terrible after it happened. We'd invested so much time and ten times the budget of *Half-Life* to build this game, only to have a load of people have their first experience of it through this unfinished random release. Some parts of the game had to be re-written as a result. We had to go back and look at our network protocols for multiplayer games and mods, and make sure we didn't leave any holes that people could exploit."

But was the leak the main reason behind the game's delay? "No, the fundamental reason was because we underestimated the amount of work left to do and how long it was going to take, especially when the team were so demoralised after the leak." And what's still left to do on the game? "Tuning, tuning and more tuning," comes Gabe's reply. If that's truly the case, then summer's looking like a fairly realistic target.

"Why don't you try getting out and giving it a little push with your Manipulator?" says Doug with a hint of amusement. He's not wrong. Using the Manipulator's alternate fire button, I start shunting the car out of the water, get back on board and resume my uncomfortable journey.

## SUCK IT UP

At the dock, I use a crane with an enormous magnet attached to suck up the increasingly abused vehicle and plop it onto the pier, only to alert several very pissed off guards with the commotion. They waste no time trying to mince me with their machine guns. I return the compliment, ducking behind crates as they pin me down with a hail of lead. Diving out, I bear down on two of them. They disperse and flock for shelter with startling realism, firing wildly as they run, but one falls as a volley from my MP5 connects with his back and bows his spine. The other one soon follows suit, crumpling to the floor with a thud.

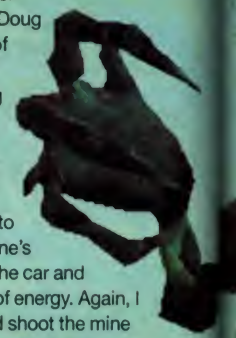
Jumping back into the car, I accelerate through a storage shelter towards a ramp leading to a huge window. Images of a heroic escape fill my mind, a majestic exit of splintered glass and a flight through the air to safety. Instead, I lose control again, decelerating pathetically and coming to a halt with half of the car teetering on the

outside of the building, while the back wobbles awkwardly within. Back and forth it goes, each dip forward more precarious than the next, until at last the nose begins its slow motion-like plummet to the earth. Great! I'm upside down. Now where did I put that Manipulator?

## ROCK 'N' ROLL

I get going again. In the foreground, circular metallic objects begin rolling towards me. "Roller Mines," exclaims Doug gleefully. A burst of machine-gun fire sends one pinging backwards like a bowling ball and bouncing against the road barrier; the others I seem to avoid. However, one's attached itself to the car and is now draining it of energy. Again, I come to a halt and shoot the mine off, only for it to resume its incessant charge over and over again. Then, an idea. Switching to the Manipulator, I suck the mine up and cast it over the ravine at the edge of the road, watching as it drops into the sea below.

I race over hills and obstacles, slowly mastering the amazingly



**"Images of a heroic escape and a flight through the air to safety fill my mind. Instead, I lose control again"**







## SEATTLE, THE HOME OF GRUNGE AND MODDERS

### COULD YOU CREATE THE NEXT COUNTER-STRIKE?

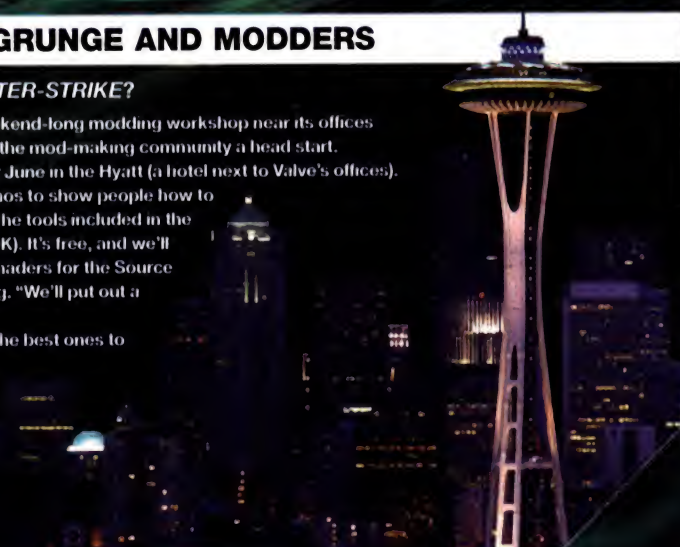
As reported a year ago, Valve plans to hold a weekend-long modding workshop near its offices in Seattle before the game ships, in order to give the mod-making community a head start.

"We're looking at holding this in either April or June in the Hyatt (a hotel next to Valve's offices). Our development team will come in and give demos to show people how to create animations and levels, and go through all the tools included in the first release of the Software Development Kit (SDK). It's free, and we'll even be showing people how to create custom shaders for the Source engine and custom multiplayer mods," says Doug. "We'll put out a press release nearer the time."

When the mods are made, we'll then choose the best ones to put on Steam for distribution," adds Gabe.

"Then the development team of that mod can decide whether they want to charge people for it." And does Valve have any plans to hold a similar course in Europe?

"Not prior to ship, but maybe after. Perhaps around ECTS time in the autumn." We'll keep you posted.





## JUST LIKE THE MOVIES

## HOW DO YOU MAKE A GAME AS CINEMATIC AS A MOVIE?

During our visit, I got to spend some time with *HL2*'s facial animator Bill Van Buren, who explained how Valve is tackling the problem of making its game as cinematic as a film. "It's really easy when you do a predefined cinematic to have very high production values, because you know where the camera and characters are going to be. In *HL2* though, because you can roam around each room and the AI is designed to react dynamically to your actions, you never know where the player is going to be during a key scene. So we have to have something good ready, no matter what the player does. We've managed to find a balance between something that's really intentional from the level designers and the animators – such

as a line of dialogue from a key character – but which continues to look good," says Bill.

Aptly demonstrating this was a scene where Alyx, Dr Kleiner and an unnamed character in full body armour discuss the dangers of having Gordon in their lab. Bill moved Gordon around the room, and all three of the supporting characters adapt perfectly, turning to Gordon at the right times and making the scene look as convincing as any pre-defined cinematic could. "Each character's animations are blended into their postures so they can deliver lines and actions convincingly and logically wherever the player is," continues Bill. You could be about to see a shooter that genuinely feels like a movie.

## "HL2 attempts to take the FPS genre



Each character moves and looks just like a real human being thanks to the game's stunning Source engine.



Ten years after the end of *Half-Life*, Gordon finds himself in City 17.

## to all-new heights"



lifelike vehicle physics which prove even more authentic than those featured in *Far Cry*. Just as I think I'm safe, a storm of bullets kicks up a maelstrom of dust and a hovercraft fills my view.

I stamp on the turbo and accelerate off, scenery flying by faster than my brain can register it, jumping over a ravine and narrowly missing a metal gate where more guards open fire, only to be cut down by my vehicle's mounted weapon. With that, the level ends, an exhilarating ride—although I'm left somewhat disappointed that only two of the weapons available to me, the Manipulator and a hugely powerful alien machine gun, seem to have been added to the *Half-Life* arsenal. Apart

## LOOKING FORWARD

### VALVE CONFIRMS *TEAM FORTRESS 2* AND *HALF-LIFE 3*!

Valve is working furiously to meet its deadlines, but Gabe is already planning ahead. "We're still working on *Team Fortress 2*," he reveals, talking about the sequel to the much-loved class-based online shooter. "When we first showed it, it was on the *Half-Life* tech, and the *Half-Life* team was already halfway down the road to building the *HL2* technology. So when the *TF* team saw what the new engine was capable of, they decided they wanted to use it too. The problem then was, how do we talk about *TF2* without talking about *HL2*? We kind of screwed ourselves there, so we decided to say nothing more on it till we announced *HL2*."

And what are the chances of us seeing a *Half-Life 3*? "We've got a lot of thoughts about the universe and things that we can do. We love the design challenges too. We'd like to do other stuff as well, but we'll definitely be doing a third *Half-Life* game. There are a lot of cool things left to do in this style of game and this universe."

What's more, from the sound of things we won't have to wait another five or six years for it either. "Part of what we're doing is trying to build things which haven't existed before. But now that they're there, we can continue the process with smaller steps. We've got a lot of things that we can do with the new technology that we haven't done yet, as opposed to the technology for *HL*. When that game shipped, we decided that there were all of these new things that needed to be built. Now all of these things have been built, we really need to use them. I think what we'll do next is go off with these new tools and try to set ourselves a whole lot of new challenges."

from these, the hardware at your disposal seems much the same as before.

### SPECCED UP

So what's the deal with the machine specs I ask, now the gaming fun has finished? Is the minimum spec still going to be a PIII 733 as promised 12 months ago? "We're probably going to push that to a 1GHz processor with 128MB RAM and a DX7 or DX6 level 3D card—we're not sure which yet," comes Dotig's reply. "We'll be pointing people towards running 256MB RAM and an ATI 9600, 9600XT, 9800 or 9800XT 3D card for optimal

performance. Once you get over a 1.2GHz processor, the improvement that you'll see will be negligible, so long as you have all of those other pieces in play."

It's been almost seven months since we were assured *Half-Life 2* would hit the shelves, a date which was compromised not only by the theft of an early version of the game (see 'Plugging The Leaks' on page 38), but also unforeseen programming complications. So when can we finally expect to get our anxious, clammy mitts on a finished copy? "We're targeting this summer for completion. We're hopeful we'll be able to declare a date at E3 in May," says Doug.

### BETTER THAN REAL LIFE?

With *Half-Life 2* so close to completion, and with the likes of *Team Fortress 2* and *Half-Life 3* to look forward to (see 'Looking Forward', above), the future is surely bright for a company that's constantly striving to roll back the barriers in an attempt to take the FPS genre to all-new heights.

On the evidence we've experienced first hand, Valve seems well on course to achieving its goals of providing an unparalleled cinematic shooting experience, one that's threatening to not only knock A-List top dog shooter *Far Cry* off its perch, but potentially blow it away. And in just a few short months time, you'll be able to find out for yourself if Valve has pulled it off. **[E3]**



With a couple of exceptions, the weaponry seems much the same as the original.

*Half-Life 2* could be up to twice as long as the original.

For sale: virtual bayside apartments.





Set on a single planet, we're promised environments ranging from cities and jungles to Arctic wastes.

The sun rises on...

# WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR

Brought up on a diet of lead, acne and Depeche Mode, **ZONE's** 41st-century boy **Richie Shoemaker** revisits his wonder years

## THE DETAILS

**DEVELOPER** Relic  
**PUBLISHER** THQ  
**WEBSITE** [www.thq.com](http://www.thq.com)  
**ETA** Autumn

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- The *Warhammer 40,000* setting
- The fact that *Homeworld* creators Relic are making it
- A powerful 3D engine that highlights the violent and stylish backdrop
- Resource management based around military objectives rather than raw materials
- You can colour your marines pink if you really want to

**I'M FINALLY** starting to feel much better. By reviewing last year's *Warhammer*-themed first-person shooter *Fire Warrior* (a critique of which can be found at [www.pczone.co.uk](http://www.pczone.co.uk) if you can't be bothered to dig out the magazine), I have exorcised the lingering demons that have plagued me since early adolescence, when I found myself turning into a rabid and incoherent *Warhammer* fanatic.

Habit duly kicked and therapy complete, I can honestly say that I am now very much looking forward to playing *Dawn Of War*. I even found myself flicking through a copy of *White Dwarf* in the newsagent the other day, no longer in despair at the lengths some fans will go to to immerse themselves in *Warhammer* lore, but in new-found admiration of the artistry contained within.

But it isn't simply the fact that *Dawn Of War* is draped in *Warhammer 40,000*

finery that has reignited my interest. No, it's mainly because Relic, of *Homeworld* fame, is making it. Relic, after years of indifference on the part of lesser developers, may finally do justice to what is one of the most uniquely stylish science-fiction realms ever conceived.

## DARK EMPIRE

For those unfamiliar with *Warhammer 40,000* or had better things to do between the ages of 11 and 16 (like getting laid, for instance), the setting is not unlike how you'd imagine Middle-earth to be, were it transposed to the 41st century: Human, Orks (different spelling), Squats (dwarves), Eldar (elves) and even furry-toed Hobbit-like creatures all vie for power across a vast universe ruled over by an omnipresent ancient Emperor.

There is no place in the *40,000* universe for *Star Trek's* sentimental

CV

GAMES  
WORKSHOP

## GAMES WORKSHOP

Relic is the developer of *Dawn Of War* but Games Workshop created the universe in which it is set. Here's a brief run down of the Nottingham company's interactive collaborations over the last ten years.

- 1995** The long-awaited sequel to Gremlin's *Space Hulk* arrives and doesn't disappoint. *Shadow Of The Horned Rat*, based on the Fantasy Battle System, did.
- 1997** *Final Liberation* is the first Epic 40,000 game. It was epic enough, but not easy.
- 1998** *Chaos Gate*, a decent X-COM-style strategy affair and the 3D RTS *Dark Omen*, which clearly went on to influence the *Total War* series.
- 1999** Based on the *Panzer General* game engine, *Rites Of War* ends up being a passable turn-based strategy game.
- 2003** *Fire Warrior* will be forever remembered as the first GW-endorsed FPS. We'd rather forget it.





The Space Marines are kitted for close-quarter fighting.

correctness, or *Star Wars*' black and white morality, *Warhammer 40,000* is end-to-end violence with everything from assassination to genocide occurring in every corner, whether at the hand of the despotic Imperium, or by way of Chaos incursion. Even Sauron would be winking in fear were he ever to reappear there – it's that grim.

### CHANGING RULES

As captivating as the setting is, it's the battles that *Warhammer* is famed for and of course they'll be a central to *Dawn Of War*. However, as *Warhammer* is a turn-based tabletop game, one wonders what sort of cuts will have to be made to facilitate the change to real-time.

"Our goal has not been to translate the tabletop game into an RTS," stresses Jay Wilson, lead designer on *Dawn Of War*. "Turn-based tabletop war gaming and computer-based real-time strategy are really two

different animals, and while there are some elements that are similar, the rule sets of one are fairly alien to the other. We think the worst mistake we could have made would have been to try a direct translation. We view *Warhammer 40,000* as a fantastic universe and the perfect setting for a variety of different games. Our goal has been to make a great RTS game that feels like *Warhammer 40,000* to those who know the universe, and just looks ridiculously cool to everyone else."

### JUDGE DREADNOUGHT

The single-player campaign concerns itself with the Blood Ravens, a chapter of monkish Space Marines dedicated to the service of the Empire in much the same way as the Praetorian guards were to their Caesar. So tough are they that their power armour is literally grafted on in childhood and they will die wherever or whenever their Emperor demands it.

Against them are the Ork hordes, babbling green-skin brutes that raid and pillage just for the pleasure of it. Their war machines may lack the high-tech punch of the Imperials, but what their Mech-like Dreadnoughts lack in sophistication, they more than make up for in crude reliability. And then there are the forces of Chaos, demonic anti-Space Marines whose dedication to snuffing out humanity is as unwavering as those who fight to protect it. Two other races are also being lined up for the game, both under wraps, although still being in possession of a few Craftworld warriors from my paint 'em up days, I'm hoping one will be the mystical and aloof Eldar.

### HERE WE GO GATHERING...

As soon as *Dawn Of War* was announced, there was a certain amount of alarm as to how Relic was going to handle the RTS resource management. Space Marines take years to train, so would they suddenly appear from hastily erected barracks? Would we be sending Marines to the clump of nearby eaf to collect fruit or chop wood?

**"Relic may finally do justice to what is one of the most uniquely stylish sci-fi realms ever conceived"**



The demonic legions of Khorne worship the Blood God. That's a crazy religion.



We thought Ork blood was green. No doubt it will be in the German version.



Sadly no Titans to control, but Dreadnoughts will do for now.



Warhammer fans will recognise this famous Marine chapter.

"No, no, no, no, no!" says Wilson emphatically. "This kind of localised resourcing doesn't make sense in the *Warhammer 40,000* universe. We also feel it's a core problem with RTS games in general. At the same time, all of our team's attempts to remove resource systems from RTS games have proven to create games that are simply not very satisfying. Resources provide pacing, goals for players to fight over, and allow players to make mistakes that they can come back from. Accordingly, we came up with a new way to do resource management which we think solves the core problems."

What this "new way" involves is the capture of key areas. Secure an objective and your off-map commanders will see fit to issue you with points which can be cashed in for reinforcements or small field emplacements that can be used as medical facilities, resupply areas or co-ordination points that will be dropped down from orbit. The system sounds similar to that planned for *Ground Control*

### Q&A

#### JAY WILSON



Miniature collector (well, he's not that small) Jay Wilson, *Dawn Of War*'s lead designer, carries on the small talk.

#### PCZ Will you be including any Epic universe units in *Dawn Of War*?

**JW** As cool as Titans are, they simply are too large for us to get them into our worlds, and too powerful to fit nicely in the size of actions you see in our game. The only way we could get them to fit into our environments would be to shrink them down, and then what's the point?

#### PCZ What has the relationship been like with Games Workshop?

**JW** Those of us on the team who have worked with licensors before have never had such a positive and easy experience. They also sent us a pile of models. We had a room full of stuff up to our chins...

#### PCZ So... would you like to buy some flock?

**JW** I doubt you have anything I don't already have. Between my Space Wolves (snow), Orks (desert), Iron Warriors (burnt grass mixed with rocks), Tyranids (deadworld), and Guard (grassy plains) I've got most of it covered.

#### PCZ Is *Dawn Of War* really a new (ahem) dawn for *Warhammer 40,000*?

**JW** We hope so. By focusing on creating high quality entertainment, I think we've made a game that fans can say, 'Wow! That looks exactly like *Warhammer 40,000* should!' But even better, we've made a game that everyone else can look at and go, 'Wow! That looks like fun!'

2, and if nothing else will put the focus squarely on the action, which is just how we like it.

### PAINT IT BLACK

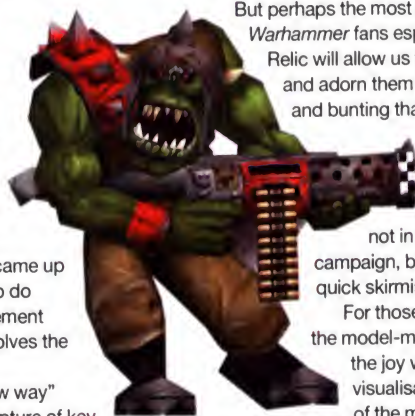
But perhaps the most exciting news – for *Warhammer* fans especially – is that

Relic will allow us to 'paint' our units and adorn them in all the banners and bunting that have made the tabletop hobby such a worldwide success. Sadly

not in the single-player campaign, but certainly for a quick skirmish or online battle.

For those less interested in the model-making side of things, the joy will rest in the visualisation of what is one of the most unique and

visceral sci-fi properties, with graphics that promise not only to set a high standard for RTS graphics, but are sure to give FPS visuals a run for their money as well. With hundreds of troops clashing Chain-swords and body parts flying, it's almost enough to make me want to dart down to my nearest Games Workshop store to buy some flock. Almost. **PCZ**







Commandeer a tank and attempt to invade Paris. You can even stop off at Disneyland on the way.

Holding out for a hero...

# SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WORLD WAR II



Will Porter takes to the French countryside and drives around in his little tank

## THE DETAILS

**DEVELOPER** Best Way  
**PUBLISHER** Codemasters  
**WEBSITE**  
[www.codemasters.co.uk/soldiers/](http://www.codemasters.co.uk/soldiers/)  
**ETA** June 2004

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- A real Boy's Own action RTS
- Direct control of your soldiers
- Completely destructible buildings and landscapes
- Hugely detailed physics engine
- Great multiplayer potential

**LIKE SOME** nerd version of *My Fair Lady*, my re-education in the way of the RTS continues; and *Soldiers: Heroes Of World War II* is the Henry Higgins to my Eliza Doolittle. Some time after the original *Command & Conquer* was released I missed the ship that sailed towards the higher grounds of military gaming – leaving me playing aesthetic no-brainers and wallowing in my own filth. Now, however, I'm being reeled back in by a game that's dedicated to no-holds-barred destruction and

against-all-odds bravery; and all without a single resource management option or technology tree in sight.

## WHERE PIXELS DARE

Take the *Commandos* series, remove the puzzle aspect of it and cross-pollinate it with the balls-out action of retro-classic *Cannon Fodder* and you have the template for *Soldiers: Heroes Of World War II*. A *Kelly's Heroes* for the digital generation. There are four campaigns: a Russian sortie into German territory, two

**CV**

**BEST WAY**

## BEST WAY

Founded in 1991, Ukrainian outfit Best Way started out working in computer engineering, applied software and other such boring things.

**1999** Best Way set up a computer gaming division, their first commercial project being *OutFront* – later known as *Soldiers: Heroes Of World War II*.





Privates on parade.



The 3D engine enables you to view the action from any angle you like.

**"Go in all guns blazing and the danger is you'll get toasted straight away"**

DAN GOWER DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, SOLDIERS

Allied campaigns and a German offensive – each containing six or seven missions. In each one, you take control of varying numbers of crack soldiers – sometimes one chirpy brute, sometimes eight of 'em – and steer them safely through maps brimming with enemies and their mighty war engines.

This isn't the simple C&C 'lasso the grunts and point them in the right direction' model; in this game you're fully involved – down and dirty in the thick of it. En masse you control your men in the age-old style of RTS troop movement – putting them on Return Fire, Hold Fire or Fire At Will settings, and sending them into battlezones where their AI will have

It's like the RTS clag-fest *Dogs Of War*. Only without Craig Charles. And better.

them ducking, diving, taking cover and stealing enemy vehicles with gay abandon.

One quick click of the mouse, however, will have you waving your soldier's gun, driving tanks with the cursor keys, actively stealing ammo from bullet-ridden corpses and personally laying waste to French bistros and town squares. "You're right there in the action – it isn't played from a God perspective," explains Dan Gower, the game's development manager.

"Because you're taking direct control you're actually part of the action, not overseeing it."

What's more, the way in which fully 3D graphics allow you to rotate, zoom and fiddle with the camera view means that it fast becomes apparent that real tactics are needed. Rather than simply adhere to the 'group 'em up and send 'em in' mentality of war-gaming, you begin to realise the importance of line of sight, taking cover and creating ambushes as your war efforts progress.

#### THE LONGEST PLAY

The first mission I was let loose on dropped me in the drink near a series of moonlit German beach fortifications: my mission to use my one soldier to take out the spotlights in the enemy encampments and on a floating gantry.

"You can go in all guns blazing; the danger of doing so is that you'll get toasted straight away," whispered Dan into my ear, as my soldier swam towards the shore – his gun held above the water. "The game has been designed and balanced so that some missions expect you to take a stealthy approach and sneak around through the bushes, using your intelligence." Climbing onto the shore the first thing I do is take control of the situation, raise my gun and blow the head off a nearby sentry. Dan starts to





A Sherman tank can give you an edge.



Blow the tracks off your enemy and he'll be buggered.

realise that intelligence perhaps isn't the order of the day. A searchlight pins me down, men flood onto the coastline and bullets start to fly. With an ounce of life left I make it to an empty machine gun placement and start to rebalance the situation – only to be met by a well-timed grenade that blows me away in beautiful physics-bound symmetry.

"All the enemies use really smart AI," points out Dan as the 'Mission Failed' sign flashes over the corpse of my short-lived soldier. "Whether they're using cover – dodging behind and around walls, crawling through undergrowth and using vehicle wrecks – or using flanking manoeuvres to sneak past your troops to attack from behind. Or sometimes even using just their sheer numbers to rush forward and overwhelm a position you're trying to hold."

#### KELLY'S ZEROES

A repeat play sees mildly better results; the highlight being the acquisition of a torpedo boat that put pay to the extremely pretty, floating array of lights. Because destruction, y'see, is yet another area of war that *Soldiers: Heroes Of WWII* excels in. There are no

set hit points or explosion animations – everything is calculated on the fly by an extremely comprehensive physics engine, the detail of which is astounding.

"We've gone right back to original archive data from WWII," explains Dan when asked how 'real' on-screen action is going to be. "When one tank fires against another, the physics of the explosion that occurs have a number of factors to take into consideration: the armour penetration values, the angle of the tank, the range between the vehicles, the type of shell that's used, the angle that the shell hits the enemy at – all these are considered." When the shell strikes its target there's also the question of where it actually hits, so if you get a lucky strike and hit an area of the tank that's got a lot of fuel, then you'll set off a whole chain of explosive reactions. This means that a seemingly wrecked vehicle can sit smouldering for ages before its fuel tank catches light and surprises the hell out of you.

#### HUNS OF NAVARONE

As you can see in the smorgasbord of screenshots, the potential for destructive mayhem is huge. All



'Allo 'Allo Redux: Director's Cut.

projectiles are governed by physical rules – they don't just stop dead when they collide with something, especially if it's fleshy. So you'll be seeing heads blown off, limbs flying and bodies being hurled every which way but loose.

Glass is blown out of windows, mailboxes and various articles of street furniture are sent flying; trees tumble

and with enough momentum tanks can plough straight through buildings. Anything wooden can catch fire as well (and anything human), so you can expect to see some mighty blazes. And none of this is pre-scripted either, not a sausage: it's all defined, guided and played out by the game engine. "It really does add something to the gameplay,"

## AUF WIEDERSEHEN, PETS

### NOT ALL THE STARS OF SOLDIERS ARE GRUFF MILITARY MEN. SOME ARE QUITE SWEET

There can't be many games that have AI codes written for chickens, but if you bravely drive a Panzer tank through a farmyard, you'll see hens switch from lazily pecking at worms to running around as if the sky was about to cave in on them. Which, metaphorically, usually happens – if you equate a falling sky to several tons of rolling metal colliding with poultry.

Elsewhere, you'll be disturbing the daily routines of cats, dogs and cows – all of which will be somewhat concerned by the machinations of man's inhumanity to man exploding around them. One plucky labrador will even play a pivotal role in your campaigns, guiding your men over a swamp in true Lassie-style.



Some chickens...



...and a dog. Woof.





You'll be able to take shelter from oncoming tanks in gutted buildings.



Chain Reaction. Bad Keanu Reeves film, good gameplay feature.



Not much will survive that...

explains Dan as I tentatively guide a Panzer tank through a Frenchman's barn. "When you hit a building from a certain angle you might take out one of the walls and use it as cover – concealing you from the enemy."

You'll be equipped with a huge range of vehicles, around 80-100 models at the last count. There'll be motorbikes with sidecars, a gamut of tanks, trucks, troop carriers, rubber dinghies, armoured vehicles and a couple that are yet to be disclosed. All conform to the realism of the game – tyres can be shot out on motorbikes (which consequently lose control and career into trees) while tanks can be crippled by the enemy blowing off their tracks. If you're running low on men, meanwhile, you'll have problems driving the bigger tanks (if you haven't got a gunner then you won't be able to

fire while in motion, as the fella at the controls will be working double-time and desperately filling in both positions). It's these little details that make *Soldiers: Heroes Of World War II* all the more endearing, such as the individual tiny panes of glass that you can shoot out, the cute and completely mental chickens, the distance a head can fly, and the time between thunder bursts and lightning strikes getting shorter as a thunderstorm approaches and the rain gets heavier.

#### TOO LATE THE HERO

And so we find ourselves at my next display of military rubbishness: a Russkie mission from the Katusha campaign. "It revolves around the story of a multiple rocket launch system that the Russians are keen to get hold of," explains Dan.

**"Wave your soldier's gun, drive tanks, steal ammo from bullet-ridden corpses and personally lay waste to French bistros and town squares"**

### Why Don't You?...

#### THE WAR WASN'T ALL IN GREEN PASTURES, Y'KNOW

The main fly in the camouflage paint is that *Soldiers'* environments could get a little samey. One of the joys of the *Commandos* series was its variety and the imagination displayed by its level designers – we hope that *Soldiers* will be able to replicate this and not just confine itself to the green field, rural town approach. Why not a few mountains, a few more sea-based levels, a fjord or two or a frozen Russian wilderness? We're fairly confident that Codies are on the ball with this one, but a lack of environmental differences could seriously dampen a good game.



Fields are fine. But the grass is sometimes greener elsewhere...





Looks like an ambush waiting to happen.



The wise will nick this little beauty...

"This is being transported by the Germans on a train and you'll have to infiltrate the train yard and use it to

## SAVE FOR SUCCESS

### RELENTLESS REPLAY AVOIDED BY CLEVER CODING

In a lot of military RTS games, failing a mission means that you have to dedicate another few hours to a replay – *Soldiers* redresses this balance with its own brand of insta-action save game. Remembering exactly what's been blown up, what's on fire and exactly what all the enemies are up to, it means that you won't have to sit through a level's slow-paced opening again and again. Plus, tactics can be tried and tested without too much wailing and gnashing of teeth.



Regular saves = no frustration.

escape." First off, however, I've got to send three men into a heavily guarded area to steal components from a rocket crash site.

### DEATH WISH

Ten minutes pass and two of my men become deceased alarmingly quickly – one meeting his maker in a swamp and the other foolishly thinking he was hidden behind a small assortment of shrubs. It's all down to one man to prove his worth. Around the downed rocket there are eight enemy bodies, one friendly body behind the bushes, a few patrolling guards and two tanks – one a smouldering wreck and the other damaged but very much on the prowl.

I put my private into prone mode and start sneaking. I click on a rock, instructing my soldier (who I'm affectionately calling Ivan) to take cover behind it. I then equip a grenade and lob it over the rock towards the patrolling



## SHARE YOUR SHERMANS

### MORE THAN A TINY LITTLE BIT OF FUN IN MULTIPLAYER

With an entire battalion's worth of military hardware conveniently littering multiplayer maps, up to 16 players will be able to take their gruff heroes into the online fray. There'll be King of the Hill modes, Capture the Flag efforts and a neat VIP mode in which a German General is ferried across a map and must either be blown away by Allied troops or shielded by the Nazi convoy. We've been promised that there'll be some nifty bots available as well, so those among us who remain unblessed by online capacities will have a range of added gameplay opportunities – until they get out of the Dark Ages that is.



**"Replicates the wargames that I used to play with a collection of dog-chewed green army soldiers as a kid"**



You'll need to put a roof on that, mate.



Ray of light, as Madonna once sang.



A hit. A palpable hit!

tank; it misses and the Germans start converging on my position. I lean around the corner, frantically clicking on the approaching Nazis and managing to down all three.

So I'm safe, but unfortunately all out of ammo and with a Panzer fully aware of where I'm hiding and locked onto my next move like a hawk. The tension is reaching its height when I make a daylight run to one of the Nazi bodies where I can grab a stick grenade and lob it at the war machine that has just launched a shell at my former hiding place. I do so and get a lucky strike – the tank erupts and Germans pour out of it their bodies aflame. All that's left to do is open up the wrecked tank's inventory, remove a massive machine gun and mow down the soldiers that've been attracted by the uproar.

Victory is mine.

*Soldiers* looks like being the first game to actually replicate the

wargames I used to play with my collection of dog-chewed green army soldiers as a kid – but now, by the miracle of technology, I no longer need to use an ounce of my own imagination. The tension brewed from three Panzers sitting on a road with the distant rumble of a US tank convoy, and the miniature mayhem that ensues, suggests that (as long as the campaign stories bear up and there's enough variety in the game's environments) this game could really be rather special.

*Soldiers: Heroes Of World War II* is clearly chasing an audience beyond the normal RTS crowd, and as such it's bending over backwards to placate strangers to the top-down viewpoint. Any game that manages to instill a nascent interest in AirFix models, and indeed military artillery physics, while simultaneously managing to attract casual gamers deserves all the plaudits we can give. At ease soldier. **PZ**





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## Crash 'n' Burns

## RICHARD BURNS RALLY

Jamie Sefton belts up for the rally game hoping to leave a certain Mr McRae fuming in last place



There'll be a driving school where you can learn driving etiquette.



Burns leaves competitors to eat dust.



Great spot for a picnic.

## THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Warthog

PUBLISHER SCI

WEBSITE Q3 2004

ETA www.richardburnsrally.com

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Full involvement of Richard Burns and co-driver Robert Reid
- Hardcore level of tweakable car statistics
- Ultra-realistic rally driving model
- Full rally school with various licences

**ALTHOUGH** rally driver Richard Burns is currently taking a break from racing to receive treatment for a brain tumour, work on his first self-titled videogame remains right on track. Far from just cloning game DNA from Colin McRae's leather driving gloves, developer Warthog is throwing out Codemasters' pick-up-and-play approach in favour of a rally title that promises to deliver every splash of mud and engine splutter in exhausting detail.

Richard Burns, his co-driver Robert Reid and ex-professional Simon Redhead have all been heavily involved in the game to ensure the driving model behaves exactly like a real rally car. Everything involved with the vehicles has been painstakingly recreated, from the air pressure in the tyres to the different dampers for the suspension. So, if you're careless, pile into a tree and bugged the radiator, the simulation will calculate how (in real time) the damaged part will affect the other areas

of your vehicle – and how quickly you'll grind to a halt.

Hardcore rally enthusiasts will love the ability to tweak the car's stats and for some details such as setting up differential maps, you'll need to take an advanced mechanics course. However, for the rest of us who just prefer to press a button that makes the car go faster, *Richard Burns Rally* has automatic set-ups for the game's eight vehicles (including Richard's favourite Subaru 2000), all created using the car manufacturers' actual rally settings.

## STUCK IN A RUT

All the tracks are modelled on rally courses from France, USA, Finland, Australia, Japan and the UK, yet it's the actual surfaces of the roads that deliver the real difference in gameplay. Unlike other rally games, the tracks have more rubble, boulders and ruts than a typical British B-road, even having potholes that fill with water if the random

weather delivers a sudden downpour.

The road imperfections can have a dramatic effect on your vehicle, sending you skidding from the track if you hit a particularly nasty obstacle at top speed. On the plus side though, they can also be beneficial, enabling you to pull off moves such as a 'Scandinavian Flick'. No, this doesn't involve a Swedish porn film – it's a genuine rally manoeuvre where you can ride a rally car around a deep rut on a corner like a train on a rail.

## PEDAL TO THE METAL

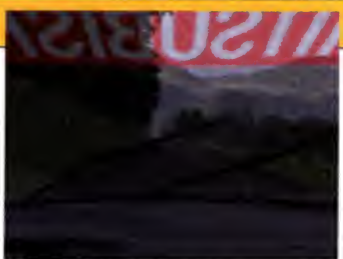
However, if *Richard Burns Rally* has one thing over racing rival *Colin McRae*, it's speed – this game is *fast*. We caned a rally car across a punishing Japanese course, and exactly like the real drivers, we couldn't just slam the foot on the accelerator for speeds of 160mph plus, or we'd constantly spin off and career into the nearest spectator. You have to drive by the seat of your Y-fronts, listening intently to Reid's barked directions and constantly shifting gears to make sure you keep a decent speed while maintaining complete control of the vehicle.

Even at this pre-beta stage of development, it's a thrilling ride – and Warthog assures us that the finished *Richard Burns Rally* will also look fantastic, with subtle lighting changes depending on what time of day you race, detailed background textures and particle effects such as realistic 3D fog and heat haze. Can Burns beat McRae? We'll find out at the finish line this autumn. **PC2**

## DASHBOARD DRIVING

## RICHARD BURNS RALLY INTRODUCES A NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT THE WORLD

The problem with most racing and rally games is that the in-car view often looks great – with those snazzy rain effects and beautifully-modelled windscreen wipers – but they're almost impossible to play. Rally games, especially, are difficult enough without having to attempt the tricky driving terrain by looking through a letterbox. So, Warthog has come up with an ingenious solution for *Richard Burns Rally*, by placing the in-car camera on the dashboard. This means you can still have the aesthetically cool windscreen effects, but are able to play the game with almost a full-screen view of the rally course.



A bobble-head Jesus is missing...




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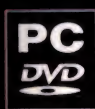
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A Banshee buggy is thiefed from *Halo*.

## For smash, get... MASHED

Could this be the start of a *Micro Machines* revival? **Jamie Sefton** relives the heyday of the top-down racer with the weapons-heavy chaos of *Mashed*

### THE DETAILS

**DEVELOPER** Supersonic

**PUBLISHER** Empire

**WEBSITE**

www.supersonic-software.com

**ETA** June 2004

### WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Isometric racer with roving 3D camera
- Fantastic fun in four-player multiplayer mode
- 13 courses and over a dozen vehicles
- Great weapons including air strikes

CV



### SUPersonic SOFTWARE

UK-based Supersonic Software was set up 14 years ago and has been making arcade-style racers since *Micro Machines 2* in 1996 for Codemasters. The company specialises in multiplayer games with what it calls "a party play feel".

**1995** *Micro Machines 2* Supersonic's first racing project, the well-received sequel to the original top-down racer, with better graphics and new power-ups.

**1998** *Circuit Breakers* introduced a 3D roving camera for the first time, but the *Micro Machines*-clone received mixed reviews on PSone.

**1999** *Pong: The Next Level* Decent re-make of the classic Atari paddle game, with colourful new tables and stupid power-ups.

**2002** *Antz Extreme Racing* Supersonic's last racer was a bog-standard *Mario Kart*-clone built around the *Antz* film licence.

**MULTIPLAYER** gaming on the PC usually means that you probably don't live in the same town, heck, even the same country as your opponents. On *PC ZONE*, the closest we like to get is the few feet that separates our office desks (for LAN games such as *Halo* and *UT 2004*), or playing against you in our regular Fight Club escapades on the Internet. We're not animals, after all.

However, a strange thing happened the other day when a preview copy of *Mashed* plopped onto the doormat. Witness four PC gamers claustrophobically crowded around a single monitor like it was, I'm ashamed to say, a games console. Rather than hearing Dave's insults, Will's anguished death moans and Suzy's dirty laugh echoing from the other side of the room, they were all now deafeningly close to me, as we chaotically raced small computer-generated cars around the courses. There was laughter, tears and rage, but most of all, that precious and oft-forgotten thing you need for a great videogame – fun.

### WOT NO LAN?

*Mashed* is the game we revealed back in issue 139, an isometric 3D racer in the mould of 1990s classic *Micro Machines* – not surprising, considering the fact that developer Supersonic was behind *Micro Machines 2* and numerous other top-down karting projects. In the single-player challenges, you race through 13 varied fantasy courses such as the icy industrial Polar Wharf, or the Chernobyl-like radioactive wastes of Nukov, each designed



Suzy wanted to be the red character because "he was smoking a large blunt".



OK, the graphics are pants, but *Mashed* is still awesome fun.

with infuriating zig-zags, jumps, twisty corners and hidden short-cuts.

You can compete against a maximum of three other computer or human opponents, but not online, hence the suffocating proximity of my magazine colleagues. There's over a dozen vehicles to choose from, each of which handles differently and provides a slightly different racing experience. Some, like the Ford Capri-like Thunderstrike have a turning circle of Pavarotti in a JCB, while others, such as

the Banshee buggy (obviously 'borrowed' from *Halo*) have solid corner-hugging four-wheel grip.

The basic 'Mashed' mode gameplay involves frantically keeping your vehicle in first place or in touch with the lead car – fall behind or off the area of the screen that the camera's following and it results in a lost life and points for your enemies.

The winner of the races is the person who gets







Formula One introduces a mortar attack to spice up races.



Some of the levels become battle arenas for a short while.

to eight points first – or alternatively, takes the chequered flag with the most points.

#### BULLET-TIME

To ramp up the intensity during races, each player has access to weapon power-ups that are dotted about the various tracks. These include an oil slick for sending cars spinning into the hoardings, a fast-firing machine gun, a rear-mounted flamethrower, a devastating mortar and a flash flare that temporarily sends the screen white for a second or two, blinding opponents. However, *Mashed* also has a unique weapon in its arsenal – the air strike. This unique attack can be used by players who've been knocked out of a round, to destroy and disrupt the remaining racers (see 'Death From Above', top right).

Although the *Mashed* mode is the main thrill, there are other multiplayer game modes to enjoy, available in both individual and team-based flavours. 'Hold the Flag' is just that, with one player having to keep a flag away from the opposition to gain points for his or her team, while 'The Fugitive' is cops and robbers where one player is a runaway criminal and the others have to apprehend them.

If you're a nobby-no-mates and want to play all the game modes in single-player, you have the computer-controlled competitors to provide the competition. Although it's nowhere near as satisfying as going head-to-head against humans, the AI still provides a decent challenge – even at this preview stage. Difficulty ranges from easy, when enemies will struggle to keep their cars on the roads, to difficult, when the little blighters will try

## DEATH FROM ABOVE

### YOUR GAME'S NOT OVER WHEN IT'S OVER...

In previous isometric 3D racers such as *Micro Machines*, if you're knocked out of a round in a race involving more than two people in multiplayer, you have to sit and twiddle your gaming thumbs until you're allowed to rejoin. Developer Supersonic has obviously noted that this can be frustrating and has come up with the air strike. This allows the other one or two players knocked out of a round to continue participating in the game by giving them the fantastic ability to direct unlimited missiles at the remaining racers.

You're given a square on-screen target that you have to hold over the racer you want to target for a few seconds before it turns into a circle and locks on. Then you simply press the launch button and watch your missile close in on its intended victim, who can attempt to avoid destruction by weaving about the course. The air strikes provide an element of unpredictability and also an extra level of vindictiveness during *Mashed* races, and in our many hours of playing the preview code in the office, they proved to be a laugh-out-loud, inspired addition to the genre.



Locking an air strike onto a racer is tricky but great fun.

and force you from the track and pepper your vehicle with machine-gun fire.

As for the graphics, there are nicely-modelled cars and some decent particle explosions and smoke trails, along with smashable tyres and road blocks that add some life to the tracks – but it's nothing to write to NVIDIA about. The textures are somewhat bland and, most annoyingly, the camera often lags behind the action to such an extent that if you're in the lead, you can end up driving off a cliff because you can't see what's in front of you.

#### CLOSE, BUT...

In fact, at preview stage there are many things that aren't quite right with *Mashed*, including the dodgy win decisions (that

always happened to me in *Micro Machines* and still bloody hasn't been fixed) and the lack of LAN and online play – an absolute crime in this day and age of broadband popularity.

Yet, in spite of all this, I still find myself wanting to play it. In multiplayer with three other people, it's just great entertainment and has that "must-have-one-more-go" factor that's missing in many current titles that have all the polygons the latest graphics cards can throw at them. *Mashed* is basically a (hawk, spit) console game, but it's promising to be a hugely enjoyable PC one too – we should have the exclusive review and playable demo next month, so you can try it out for yourself. If you have enough friends... [PC]



An air strike is locked onto the lead car.



Yee-ha! Jumps are great short-cuts and hide power-ups.



Begun the Episode III hype has...

# STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO

Protocol droid *Richie Shoemaker* sneaks a look at LucasArts' latest shooter



The latest edition of the Kays catalogue contained some futuristic fashions.

## THE DETAILS

**DEVELOPER** LucasArts  
**PUBLISHER** Activision  
**WEBSITE** [www.lucasarts.com](http://www.lucasarts.com)  
**ETA** Autumn

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Destined to be the best game to date based around the prequel trilogy
- More tactical than your average *Star Wars* shooter
- Unreal engine, revved up to the max
- Dark, tense and atmospheric backdrop that hints at things to come in *Episode III*

**THERE'S A** disturbance in the Force concerning LucasArts' new *Star Wars* game. Apart from being designed to fit the constraints of a living room console, *Republic Commando* is being coded internally. As we all know, it's rare for a shooter to impress as wildly as it might when designed to work on lesser

hardware. In addition, LucasArts' home record these last few years has not been as consistent as when it's recruited specialist help from outside – such as with BioWare's recent magnificent RPG *Knights Of The Old Republic*. More pertinently, the game is obviously not set around events of the classic trilogy, but specifically in between the

climactic Geonosis battle from *Episode II* and the introduction of General Grievous, said to be a major antagonist in next year's missing link in the *Star Wars* saga. Going by the quality of the last two films and the games tied in to promote them, the worry is that *Republic Commando* will follow much the same path.

Yet, despite these reservations, we remain not only optimistic but really rather excited – aroused even – about the prospect of a new first-person *Star Wars* shooter. A game that not only enables you to step inside the white armour of those soon-to-be stormtroopers, but one that will require you to command a full squad of toughened clone warriors as they conduct secretive behind-the-lines missions where others – Jedi aside – would fear to tread.

Using the Unreal engine, heavily adapted from the 2003 edition to include its high detail models, ragdoll physics, cool lighting and confined level design, we can rightly expect *Republic*



Friendly fire is a hazard.

CV



## LUCASARTS

With a catalogue of classic games stretching back over 20 years, LucasArts is (among other things) the centre of all things *Star Wars*. However, its prequel titles have yet to make the same impact as those set in far more interesting times...

- 1999** The excitement builds as the first *Star Wars* movie for nearly 20 years is released. Then the games. Oh dear.
- 2000** The drought continues... *Battle For Naboo*, *Obi-Wan* and *Demolition* – all shite, prompting LucasArts to have a rethink.
- 2001** *Star Wars: Starfighter* wasn't that bad, neither was *Super Bombad Racing*. LucasArts admits defeat and announces it'll be drafting in outside talent to work on some decent games.
- 2002** A big year for *Star Wars* with no less than five games released in and around *Attack Of The Clones*. None on PC though, which is perhaps just as well.
- 2003** *Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy* and *Knights Of The Old Republic* are unsheathed. Both turn out to be decent games and LucasArts feels the Force once more.

*Commando* not only to be the best prequel title to date, but one of the most tense *Star Wars* games ever.

## ALIEN RESURRECTION

"We were inspired by movies like *Black Hawk Down*," says Steve Matulac, producer of *Republic Commando*. "We wanted that same sort of military feel, to move away from the high gloss of *Attack Of The Clones* and introduce a real sense of foreboding, where alien worlds feel very creepy and the game itself stylistically looks very de-saturated."

Matulac also puts forward *Aliens* as another influence – and after being treated







Don't fancy his chances...



Revive your comrades using health packs.



Watch out, Beadle's about.

to a view of some early levels, it's easy to spot why. As one mission begins, we see our squad descend into the bowels of Geonosis, steam rising from rocky pores and organic goo casting familiar spires that jut out from the dank and dim walls.

Static interference crackles menacingly across the teams' visors, making it hard to penetrate the gloom ahead. As a scout is sent forward, the familiar shrill of blaster rifles opens up as swarms of Geonosians (those insect-like winged warriors) set about the lone trooper. If there were motion trackers and corrosive body fluids, it could possibly pass as an official *Aliens* title: if nothing else, the change of mood and pace should make a nice change from the familiarity of the *Jedi Knight* series.

But it's the game's tactical aspect that most deliberately separates it from the

other games in the *Star Wars* series, with your four-clone squad able to advance through 15 levels of close-quarter action as they fight back the separatist hordes of, among others, Battle Droids, Trandoshan slavers and elite bodyguards.

#### RUN THE GAUNTLET

Defensive and aggressive stances will affect the speed of movement, with soldiers able to stand, crawl and even inch along the ground, covering the backs of their comrades and securing tactical hotspots in readiness for any counter-offensive. Also, instead of a tactical overview present in games such as *Hidden & Dangerous*, we're promised a simple dynamic interface that sees you responding to threats quickly and easily.

"It's challenging to strike a balance between action and hardcore tactics,"

admits Matulac. "However, we definitely don't want you to have to micro-manage your squad. We've yet to nail down the full range of tactical commands and options, but you'll be able to order your troops to 'leapfrog' through the world, where one guy moves up while another covers. You'll also be able to order 'stacking', where two guys can share a cover point, with one taking a high shot and the other guy the low shot."

*Republic Commando*, especially after the success of recent *Star Wars* titles. LucasArts seems more confident in trying out new ideas instead of shoehorning its expansive universe into tried and tested genres, and that can only be good news. *Republic Commando* may not be the most tactical shooter, nor the dark undertones as tempting as the Dark Side itself, but the new timeline is promising to be as enjoyable as those set during the original trilogy. **[X]**

#### DARK FORCES

Of course, the game's success will depend squarely on the strength of the AI. It's too early to cast judgement on that right now, but from what we've seen, your comrades will certainly be able to think for themselves (Unreal AI being about the best in the business).

"The AI will be intelligent, but the characters will also *look* intelligent while they're carrying out orders to help reinforce the military aspect of the game," adds Matulac. There wasn't much to see of the enemy's intelligence, but then the game's über-badasses – Grievous's retinue of men – are yet to be unveiled for obvious reasons.

Clearly then, there's much to look forward to with

## Why Don't You?...

### THESE ARE THE DROIDS WE'RE LOOKING FOR

If you've played *Knights Of The Old Republic*, I'm sure you'll have chanced across Assassin Droid HK-47 – for many players the most entertaining and useful character in the game by quite some margin. Sadly, in *Republic Commando*, you only control clone troopers – and while some attempt has been made to differentiate your squad mates from each other, imagine how more varied gameplay might be if you had a reprogrammed Droideka wheeling alongside you, or an unarmed R2 unit to protect. I put this to producer Steve Matulac, who praised the idea and made a mental note to consider it for the sequel – remember, you heard it here first...

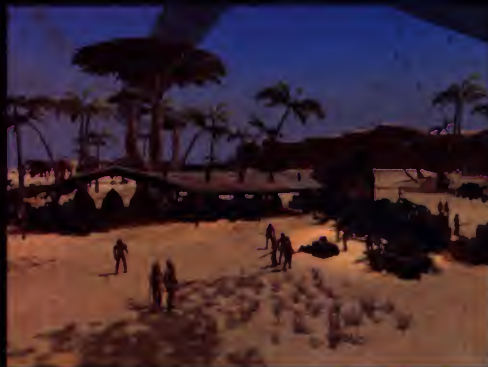


"Cooee, behind you."





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# REVIEWS

THE DEFINITIVE LOWDOWN ON ALL THE LATEST PC GAMES

## AIMING FOR LESS



■ ASSOCIATE EDITOR Anthony Holden

▲ I read a market research report recently that said: "[Games companies] are quickly learning that for certain well-known properties licensed from other media, having the best brand can be better than having the best gameplay." The basic point was that as the games industry grows, it's learning how to do things more like the movie and music industries, exploiting the 'marketability' of 'properties' in favour of creative concerns.

It also neatly sums up the attitude we're always bitching about in these pages. I'm sure you're sick of hearing it: 'Games are getting dumber, there's no innovation, bring back *Sam & Max 2*.' And when you hear that 'style over substance' is a policy that's *actively pursued* by the industry, it's no bloody wonder.

Normally, it's only the film industry that's cited in these reports, and we can usually take heart from that, seeing as the mainstream film industry is even more soulless and yet great movies still get made. This report (dubbed 'The Impact Of Licensing In Interactive Entertainment') is even scarier, as it highlights similarities with the mainstream music industry – a famously hateful place where the creative process is ruled by producers and money men rather than directors and artists. Clearly, the same can increasingly be said of game production.

It's scary stuff, but we can take heart from this month's reviews line-up, as there's very little licensed content in there. Highlights include *Painkiller* (p60) and *Perimeter* (p70) – both totally new 'properties' with tons of gaming soul – as well as *TOCA Race Driver 2* (p64), an in-house title from a big publisher that nevertheless provides a real lesson in how to do justice to a popular game brand. Maybe there's hope yet.



The greatest old-school shooter since *Quake II*? Find out in our exclusive review of *Painkiller* on page 60.

## THE ZONE SCORING SYSTEM

Some people (mainly games publishers) say that our scoring system is harsh. It's not. It's honest and built around the seemingly outdated idea that 50 per cent is an average score. Likewise, 70 per cent is a good score, anything above 80 per cent is excellent, and 90 per cent and above is a Classic (see below). Talking of Classic awards, don't expect to see one every issue as we don't chuck them around like confetti.

## OUR REVIEWERS

We think our reviewers are the best in the business. Each one is a specialist in numerous genres and will have played every major release, so no game is judged in isolation. We also

make sure the right game gets reviewed by the right person, which means you won't see Steve Hill reviewing an RPG and we won't let Will loose on *FIFA Football 2004*. You can have your say on the games and our reviews as well. If you have a comment to make, please email your views to [letters@pczone.co.uk](mailto:letters@pczone.co.uk) and entitle your email 'Feedback'.

## ONLINE REVIEWS AND MULTIPLAYER UPDATES

We review a lot of games before they go on sale and if there are no public servers running before we go to print, we won't second-guess how the game's going to play online. Instead, you'll find dedicated online reviews of all the major releases in our regular Online Zone section.

Online Zone is also the place where we review online-only games, mods and major updates of online games. Between the two sections, we've got every gaming angle covered!

## OUR PCS

We test games on a variety of systems so we can report how they perform in the real world. All our reviewed games are played on the manufacturer's minimum specification, as well as our own top-end rig – the Area-51 from Alienware (below).



Only games that score 90 per cent or more receive the coveted Classic award. The best of the best.



The second tier award for games scoring between 80 and 89 per cent. Essential purchases.

## MEET THE TEAM



DAVE WOODS

Colin McRae 2004 and UT2004

Singles: Airtight Edition



JAMIE SEFTON

Painkiller and Pro Evo

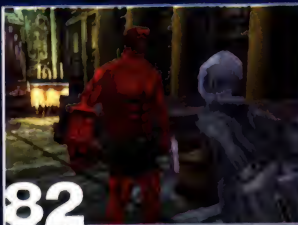
Singles (Northern Edition): They'll Do It For A Bag Of Chips





64

**TOCA RACE DRIVER 2**  
The Swiss Army knife of racers?



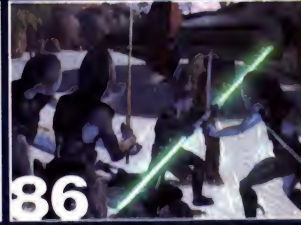
82

**REPLAY**  
The latest budget titles rated



85

**FEEDBACK**  
Let us feel your wrath!



86

**SUPERTEST**  
We put the top RPGs to the test

## DEFINITIVE REVIEWS

- 60 **PAINKILLER**
- 64 **TOCA RACE DRIVER 2**
- 68 **SINGLES: FLIRT UP YOUR LIFE**
- 70 **PERIMETER**
- 74 **LORDS OF THE REALM III**
- 75 **RAINBOW SIX 3: ATHENA SWORD**
- 76 **PRO RUGBY MANAGER 2004**
- 77 **COLD WAR CONFLICTS**
- 78 **THE CAT IN THE HAT**
- 78 **IL-2: FORGOTTEN BATTLES - ACE EXPANSION PACK**
- 79 **KNIGHTS OF THE TEMPLE**
- 79 **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES**
- 79 **SCHIZM II: CHAMELEON**
- 80 **SPELLS OF GOLD**
- 80 **SPARTAN**
- 80 **FAST LANES BOWLING**
- 81 **SONIC ADVENTURE DX DIRECTOR'S CUT**
- 81 **MIDNIGHT NOWHERE**

### 82 RE-RELEASES

INCLUDING CIVILIZATION II, ENTER THE MATRIX, RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC, HELLBOY: ASYLUM SEEKER, BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS, TOTAL IMMERSION RACING AND MANY MORE

### 85 FEEDBACK

YOUR VIEWS, REVIEWS AND OPINIONS ON THE LATEST GAMES

### 86 SUPERTEST: ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

THE ZONE TEAM DON THEIR ARMOUR'D CODPIECES TO FIND THE GREATEST RPG IN THE LAND



64



68



70



**ANTHONY HOLDEN**

Unreal II: XMP and Pandora Tomorrow

Singles (Aussie Edition):  
Singles Go Down Under



**PAUL PRESLEY**

X2: The Threat, EVE Online and Battlefield Vietnam

Singles Online: Swing When You're Winning



**WILL PORTER**

Painkiller and Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time

Singles: Needy And Alone (sponsored by Razzle and Pot Noodle)



**MARTIN KORDA**

Medieval: Total War and UT2004

Singles: Erotic Kebab Eating



**STEVE HILL**

TOCA Race Driver 2

Singles On Holiday: The Isle Of Lesbos. (Aren't they actually working on this? - Ed.)



**RICHIE SHOEMAKER**

Perimeter and Savage

Singles: The Aftermath - Two Kids, No Job And A Crippling Mortgage



"We are the Templar Knights who say 'Ni!'"

# PAINKILLER



■ £29.99 | Pub: DreamCatcher | Dev: People Can Fly |  
ETA: Out Now | [www.painkillergame.com](http://www.painkillergame.com)

**REQUIRES** PIII 1GHz, 256MB RAM, 1.2GB HD space and a 32MB 3D card  
**DESIRES** P4 1.7GHz, 512MB RAM, 64MB HD space and a broadband Internet connection

**Jamie Sefton cures his first-person shooter headache with the plink, plink, fizz of his trusty pump-action shotgun**

**A BULKY**, out-of-shape demon from the depths of hell is struggling towards me carrying a fizzing barrel of gunpowder. I take aim and shoot the barrel, obliterating the unfortunate creature and sending a mixture of wood splinters, limbs and offal splattering around the walls of an underground cavern. It's hilarious. In fact, the noise of my guffaws is so loud that it interrupts the ZONE team, who rush over to take a look at what was so chucklesome.

I've said it once and I'll say it again – there's nothing wrong at all with violent videogames. In

the messed-up shitstorm of a world we live in, taking a few virtual potshots at some pretend monsters on a computer screen is one of the least harmful things we can do. Which is why I love *Painkiller*. This gloriously violent first-person shooter is a defiant, bloodstained two-fingered salute to those pious social commentators who continually condemn videogames as irresponsible entertainment. It's also a hugely entertaining, well-designed game that possesses some of the most beautiful-looking levels I've ever seen – and yes, that includes *Far Cry*.



I am monster. Hear me roar.

## INPERSPECTIVE

### FAR CRY

Reviewed issue 140, Score 93%  
The new benchmark in first-person shooters. Incredibly intelligent enemy AI, a great armoury, excellent physics and huge, beautiful tropical island levels.

### WILL ROCK

Reviewed issue 131, score 40%  
Yet another attempt at a *Serious Sam*-style no-brain blaster, but with dated graphics, unimaginative level design and no physics engine. Avoid at all costs.

## LOCK AND LOAD

Let's get down to business. *Painkiller* is a no-nonsense run-and-gun blaster that takes its inspiration from classics like *Doom*, *Quake* and *Duke Nukem*, but with some hugely inventive weaponry, smart ragdoll physics and next-gen visuals. Developer People Can Fly is particularly proud of the fact that the game doesn't have a crouch button – like myself, it seems they don't like stealth much. This is a major part of

*Painkiller's* appeal – it knows that it's not *Deus Ex*, and it revels in that fact.

You play the game as Daniel Garner, an every-dude who's recently died in a car crash along with his wife Catherine. However, while your beloved has subsequently strapped on a pair of golden wings and begun banging out the latest Dido album on her celestial harp, you're stranded in Purgatory and must purify your

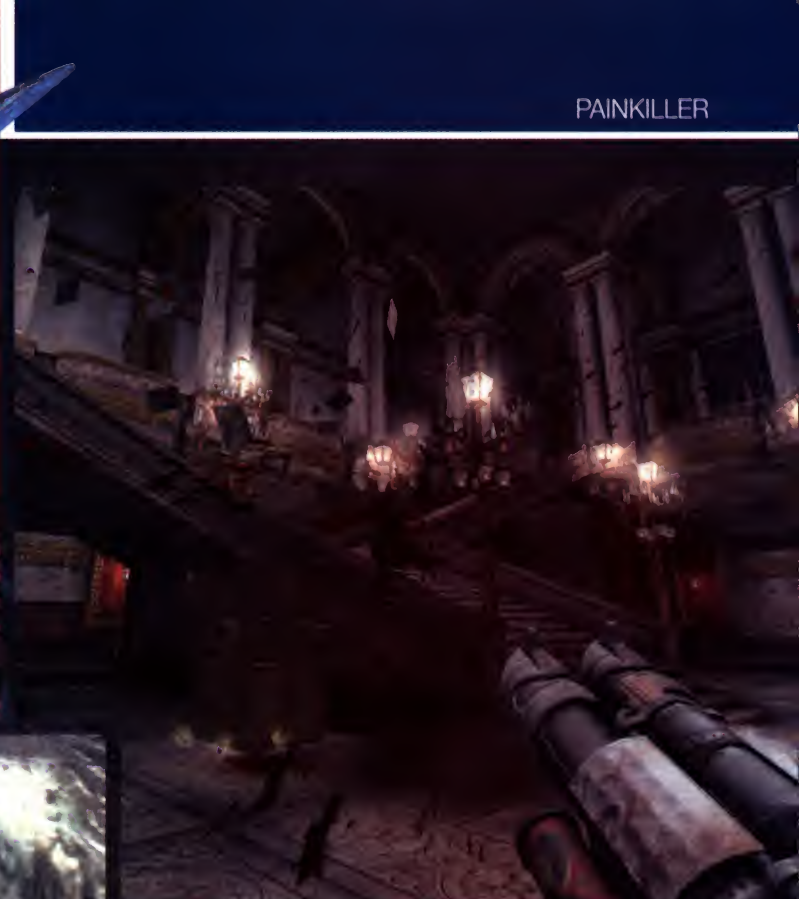
soul before you can join her. Luckily for us, this basically involves blasting the holy crap out of Satan and his army of devilish followers.

*Painkiller* has four levels of difficulty and is crammed with 24 levels, made up of five chapters and always finishing with a big boss battle (and we mean big). All in all, *Painkiller*

**Collect 66 souls and become a rampaging demon.**

will take most gamers at least ten hours to plough through on an easier level, and that's without taking time to discover secret areas, collect all the holy items and gold coins, and admire the gorgeous





*Painkiller* – presented in Splattervision®.

every one of the hellish servants in your path with a deft tap of the mouse. Fantastic.

*Painkiller*'s level design isn't particularly special, with much wandering about and re-tracing of steps, but there's just enough variety to surprise you and keep things from getting monotonous. This includes the later addition of bounce pads, a

series of *Indiana Jones*-style crushing ceilings, as well as a fair few nasty traps that we'll allow you to discover on your own – and get royally shafted, just like we did.

It has to be said though, the architecture and backgrounds are awe-inspiring. Each one of the 24 levels has completely different styles and textures,

## “Blast the holy crap out of Satan and his devilish followers”



Nice doggy.

scenery whizzing past at a liquid 60fps.

Gameplay is simple. There are no RPG stats to struggle with, no NPCs to talk to and no vehicles. Just aim your weapon at anything that roars, bellows or cackles, shoot them back to Hades, and progress to the next part of the level.

Level transitions are signified by a checkpoint in the shape of a fiery red pentacle. Walk over it and a few doors will usually seal shut and the next wave of monsters will begin piling towards you, bent on reducing your already-dead body into purgatory pâté.

Additional interest is provided by special Tarot cards and power-ups. Silver (temporary) and gold (permanent) Tarot cards are awarded for completing specific actions during a level,

such as finishing in a certain time, and endow you with special powers such as a cool slo-mo effect. Before starting a level, you can arrange your cards on a Black Tarot board, and as long as you've collected enough gold coins from blasting open coffins, urns and barrels, you can use them to aid your battles during a level.

### BERSERKER

Souls, meanwhile, are the green floating detritus of defeated foes that when collected, add one to your health. However, once you've accumulated 66 of them, they transform you into a powerful demon that sees everything in black and white, with enemies shown as shimmering orange entities. Rather like the Berserk mode from *Dooms* of yore, you can then storm around tearing apart

### GIANT KILLERS



PC ZONE's Martin Korda in videogame form.

### BIGGEST. BOSSES. EVER

The five Satanic servants you meet at the end of each chapter are bloody huge. These behemoths are 50 to 100 times your size, towering above you, and can only be killed after you've discovered their weakness. For example, the baddie known as Thor has a giant hammer that he uses to bash on the ground to send you – and any nearby chunks of rock – flying into the air, before crashing back down to earth. You first have to shoot and destroy the hammer, then go after Thor once he's vulnerable.





This ice level has you slipping and sliding as well as shooting.

and you rarely – if ever – see anything repeated. Some of the buildings are simply huge and beautiful to look at, such as the Opera House with its sculpted marble pillars, detailed Renaissance paintings, and intricately woven carpets. Plus, all the buildings are set against some incredible sky, rain, cloud and other environmental, graphic and lighting effects that really bring the levels to life.

Populating, or rather infecting the levels, is a

menagerie of more than 25 Hell-beasts, many of which alter their attack tactics as you progress. For example, the Evil Monks begin by just hacking and slashing with axes, then move on to throwing them, before you encounter the Devil Monks, with a staff that poisons you with evil vapour.

#### BAD BROTHERS

In fact, pretty much all of the enemies are great in their own way. Witness the Asylum

#### Doom-style Berserkers give you a bloody boost.

Freaks, who lurch towards you, wrapped in a straitjacket, with an electric head-restrainer that sparks into life when you approach, blowing their bonces off and causing you damage.

The AI is often basic, with most enemies just blundering

## “God has all the best weapons, each worth its weight in NRA membership forms”

towards you rather like classic zombies, where their threat comes from simply overpowering you with numbers (you often see more than a dozen enemies on-screen at once). However, later baddies, such as Templar Knights, use their shields to defend themselves from attacks, and are therefore much trickier to finish off. And that's not to mention the awesome end-of-level bosses (see 'Giant Killers', page 61).

So what kind of heavenly armoury are you given to mount an offensive against the evil hordes? Well, if the Devil has all the best tunes, then God has all the best weapons, and although *Painkiller* only has five of them, each is worth its weight in NRA membership forms. Every gun has two distinct firing modes that provide a good mix of short- and long-range ability. For a full breakdown check out the God's Armoury box, but for the record, the weapons are awesome – especially the Stakegun that fires wooden stakes at enemies, pinning their bodies and limbs to walls and ceilings in a most gruesome manner.

But this is only half the reason we love *Painkiller*. You see, when you couple the game's mega-destructive arsenal with the latest Havok 2.0 physics engine, you really have a match made in heaven. In supposedly real-world games such as *Deus Ex 2*, the Havok-based physics can seem somewhat lightweight – bump into a table and it flips around like it was made of

buildings made of stone blocks that topple over and crash to the ground.

Shotgun-blast a Skeleton Soldier in the face and watch as he flails backwards and into the air, crimson liquid spattering on the screen and heads, legs and arms separating and flying in multiple directions. In one memorable level, half a dozen explosive barrels come tumbling down some steep stairs along with a horde of enemies – one chaingun round and the barrels set off an explosive chain reaction, sending body parts and internal organs skittering down the steps. Anyone who's been brought up on the visceral thrills of *Doom* will feel their hearts glow with warmth.

#### BLOOD ON THE WIRES

Phew. I'm fast running out of space here and there's still tons I want to share with you, such as the game's beautiful specular lighting, the excellent atmospheric sound effects and cheesy rock soundtrack that sparks up when evil is near. Online multiplayer is also well catered for, with the usual

### MISSED OPPORTUNITY (O)



To snipe or not to snipe, that is the question.

#### WE LIKE THE LIMITED WEAPON OPTIONS, BUT JUST ONE MORE WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE

People Can Fly don't want any kind of stealth element in *Painkiller*, but we reckon the game would still have benefited from some kind of sniper rifle. You can make long-distance kills with the Stakegun and Rocket Launcher, but it's a crude, hit-and-miss affair – especially in some of the larger outdoor levels. Everyone loves a sniper rifle – myself included, and I think stealth games are for girls and wimps. (You know nothing – Ed.)

The muted cries of the Freaks are disturbingly funny.



## GOD'S ARMOURY

PAINKILLER MIGHT ONLY HAVE A HANDFUL OF WEAPONS, BUT EACH HAS TWO DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT FIRE MODES

### PAINKILLER



The default weapon doesn't require ammunition. Primary fire is a lethal spinning blade, whereas alt-fire sends out a lethal grapple hook that can pull distant enemies apart or towards you to finish off at close range. Enormous fun with Havok physics.

### SHOTGUN



Primary fire is a close-quarter shell shooter, whereas alt-fire has a *Nukem*-esque freezer weapon. Nothing better than freezing enemies and then blasting them into icy chunks small enough to plop into an unholy Martini.

### ROCKET LAUNCHER



Primary fire is a devastating missile launcher, whereas alt-fire has a fast-firing chaingun that can rip through a crowd of hellish adversaries in seconds. Use short bursts to conserve ammo.

### ELECTRODRIVER



Primary fire launches quick-fire shurikens at enemies, while alt-fire sends out a stream of powerful electricity that shocks any nearby foes and leaves them smoking and twitching on the ground.

### STAKEGUN



The greatest weapon in *Painkiller*. Primary fire sends sharp wooden stakes driving into enemies, pinning them to walls or floors, whereas the alt-fire is a powerful grenade launcher.

### A UFO – Unidentified Flying Object. Arr!

keep the never-ending Damage power-up until the time runs out. Probably our favourite mode, and without doubt the funniest, is the self-titled *People Can Fly*, in which damage is only scored when opponents are airborne.

OK, OK, *Painkiller* does have a few bad points. For a start, there's a certain amount of clipping, with characters' arms coming

through doors and that infuriating pleasure of being shot through a wall when you're near an enemy on the other side. Plus, whenever you get killed (and you will) the game automatically reloads the last checkpoint rather than the last quicksave, so you have to quit out and re-load. Very annoying.

Finally, *Painkiller* is just dumb, relentless blasting with a teensy bit of puzzle-solving – there's no boundaries being pushed outside of sheer gratuitous violence. It's sure to attract comparisons with *Serious Sam*, which also came from an unknown



## SECOND OPINION

WILL PORTER

*Painkiller* isn't about long sessions of tactical shootery – it's a game that promises and delivers instant gratification. After an argument with a loved one, a hefty gas bill or a particularly harrowing edition of *Neighbours*, there's no better way to let off steam than to run riot through Purgatory firing stakes through zombies' faces. Play it for a few hours and you're liable to get bored; play it in small doses and it's superb fun.

It also has stupendous bosses, beautifully animated monsters and (in my opinion) one of the greatest weapons ever to have graced the FPS in the form of the stakegun.

I hated *Serious Sam*, high-on despised it in fact, but *Painkiller* has enough variety, surprises and wonderful violence to put a smile on the most curmudgeonly of faces.

developer and pleased us with its old-skool blasting, but it really is in a different class from that game and other B-grade efforts like *Chaser*.

*People Can Fly* wears its influences on its sleeve, but you do get the impression that the game was a labour of love. *Painkiller* abounds with sublime touches, such as the boxes full of postcards that flutter down around you when shot and the fireworks that send multi-coloured sparks whizzing in all directions. I've said it once, and I'll say it again – there's nothing wrong at all with violent videogames. Disagree, and I'll send you to hell with a wooden stake through your eye socket. [A]

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Hilariously violent with great physics
- ✓ Huge, beautiful-looking levels
- ✓ Imaginative enemies and some nice weaponry
- ✗ Dumb AI
- ✗ Relentless shooting may not appeal to some
- ✗ A few tedious bits of level design knocking about

# 83

Heavenly blasting in Hell

Sometimes you have to take on dozens of enemies at once.

A Zombie warlord with an old flame.





Note to self: visit Kwik-Fit.

# TOCA RACE DRIVER 2

■ £34.99 | Pub: Codemasters | Dev: Codemasters | ETA: April 23 | [www.codemasters.co.uk/tocaracedriver2](http://www.codemasters.co.uk/tocaracedriver2)

**REQUIRES** PIII 800, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card **DESIRES** P4 1.4GHz, 512MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

**Steve Hill and 35 expensive vehicles. What could possibly go wrong?**



**IT'S FAIR** to say we've seen more than our fair share of driving games here at PC ZONE. So much so that at the beginning of each review it is traditional – if not compulsory – to casually bemoan the surfeit of automotive entertainment on the

PC. To be honest, we can barely muster a half-hearted shrug of despair as another Off-Road Formula One Street Racing Rally game drops onto the mat with hollow promises of being the greatest thing on four wheels. However, when that game

comes from genre specialist Codemasters and claims to feature the most motorsports ever to appear in a single title, we are prepared to listen. Throw in the heritage of the long-running TOCA series and we've already got the kettle on.

Make no mistake: this is the big one, in every sense. No less than 15 different disciplines are melded together via an extensive career path, each brimming with Codemasters' trademark high production values and attention

to detail. Do you want to know what they are? Read this: GT Sports Car Racing, Street Racing, DTM, V8 Supercars, Global GT Lights, Rally Cross, Formula Ford, Open Wheel Grand Prix, Classic Car Racing, Super Truck Racing, Stockcar Oval Racing, Ice-Racing, Convertible Racing and Performance Cars.

Essentially a different set of variables plugged into the same game engine, the majority of the vehicles on offer provide a

**"This is the big one, in every sense. No less than 15 different disciplines are melded together via an extensive career path"**

## INPERSPECTIVE

### TOCA RACE DRIVER

Reviewed Issue 128, Score 76%

Essentially a less comprehensive version of this sequel, and with an annoying lead character, it still provides a decent drive.

### TOTAL IMMERSION RACING

Reviewed Issue 124, Score 64%

Not as many cars and no cut-scenes in sight. Solid budget driving with a rudimentary career mode is the order of the day.

## MAKING MOVIES

### THRILL TO THE EXCITING PLOT OF TOCA RACE DRIVER 2

A fearless young buck with a taste for tarmac and a penchant for petrol, you are drawn into a complex three-way struggle for your attentions. At the centre is grizzled pit boss Scotty, a largely incomprehensible misogynist who is appalled when a sassy blonde drops by the trailer with an offer of sponsorship cash. Things are complicated further by the appearance of a female documentary-maker who pops up to simmer inanely while encouraging you to drive more dangerously for the sake of the film.

Will Scotty drink himself to death? Will he actually say anything useful during a race? Will the mysterious blonde come good with the cash? And just what are the film-maker's real intentions? Find out, only in *TOCA Race Driver 2*...



"Lose the drunken Scotsman and let's talk..."





Drive classic cars, and destroy them beyond recognition.



Close but no McRae, even if you do get your name in the window.

superb drive, although the rally cars do suffer in comparison to *Colin McRae*, despite the pace notes being read by stalwart Nicky Grist. As for the Super Trucks, we've made our position clear before: if driving a lorry was any fun we'd all be eating Yorkies and using CB radio.

#### WHAT'S THE STORY?

A massive project, *TOCA Race Driver 2* dwarfs most other driving games, including last year's original story-based affair. Annoying American Ryan McKane has been jettisoned – in Codemasters' own words they "sacked him off" – to be replaced by none other than your good self. With all the story sequences presented from a first-person view, you are the star of the show, although you appear to be playing a mute (unless you're prepared to take interactive entertainment to the extreme and chip in with your own dialogue). The idea of a

narrative-based driving game is one that initially had purists reeling in disgust, but we quite like it. If nothing else it offers some incentive to continue, even if the reward is little more than a 20-second clip of people talking in a caravan.

Such footage appears intermittently throughout the core single-player game, which sees you setting out as a raw young buck with plenty of potential but without a pot to piss in, the idea being to move up the ranks and finally compete in the Masters Grand Prix. The concept of a career mode initially had us imagining full race weekends, gruelling qualifying sessions and lengthy races. Admittedly you can set these up off-menu, but the career mode essentially consists of a series of mini-challenges, with races often clocking in at no more than two laps apiece. And as for the idea of being able to choose your career path using all the



Where's the fun in that? You might as well be on the M6.



The proper vanilla view, with all the dials switched on.

available vehicle types, this is also bogus. The choice is generally between one or occasionally two types of vehicle, and it's a completely linear route, presumably to accommodate the pre-recorded story footage.

#### CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

What this approach does do is to force you to master each of the disciplines, as if you don't then your career won't progress any further. Early on it's something of a breeze, and anyone with basic

road sense should be able to negotiate the opening stages. Straddling a fine line between arcade and simulation, the handling for each vehicle type has been tweaked extensively and the key to success is learning what you can get away with, be it handbrake turns or sneaking on to the grass for a crucial shortcut.

There's also a sizeable discrepancy in the damage accrued by the different vehicles. For instance, the open-wheeled cars will buckle like a

belt at the mere hint of contact, whereas the more robust cars can effectively be used as battering rams. Bludgeoning your way through the pack is a tactic that can be liberally employed, partly because you can get away with it, but also largely due to the brevity of the races. Given two or three laps to get to the front, picking off the field one by one isn't really an option and some unscrupulous driving is called for.

This is particularly relevant in the championships that require





Holden is apparently big down under. So he says, anyway.

you to place above or in the vicinity of a specific driver (typically called Stomper, Five-O or even the aptly-named Bastide). If you can nobble your rival it gives you a far greater chance of finishing ahead of him, and the game can descend into glorified dodgems. It's not all one-way traffic though, as your rivals will occasionally have a nibble back at you, and indeed some of the cut-scenes feature pit-lane hissy-fits. In general, the opponent AI is extremely realistic, and you can find yourself gleefully steaming past a four-car pile-up.

#### DAMAGED

You can't simply drive into other cars with complete impunity though, as the much-vaunted



Ice-racing provides a change of scenery.

Terminal Damage model will eventually take its toll, although again this is more of an issue in longer races, with the car

losing straight line speed and the handling deteriorating. It's worth giving your car an occasional thrashing though, if only to see the damage model in action. A pleasing combination of shattered glass and twisted metal, it is to the car

**"In some ways, you are the villain of the piece, winning races and championships through occasionally unscrupulous means"**

manufacturers' credit that they have allowed their creations to be mutilated in this manner. And it's not called Terminal Damage for nothing – one collision too many and it's race over. Not a great problem in the career mode, as you can simply load each race again, something that you may find yourself doing countless times after just getting off to a bad start.

In some ways, you are the villain of the piece, winning races and championships through occasionally unscrupulous means. It all adds to the experience though, which is rarely less than compelling. It



Set the controls for the heart of the sun.

Nice set of wheels, shame about the paint job.



#### MISSED OPPORTUNITY



It's good, but it's not right.

#### TOCA OR NOT TOCA? THAT IS THE QUESTION

The name of the game is *TOCA Race Driver 2* yet there are no TOCA cars in it. Why? Well, considering that the name of the game was going to be simply *Race Driver 2* until a few months before release we can only assume that the licence was re-secured at the last minute, not giving the development team time to knock out an incarnation of a TOCA event. A shame though, as a bit of British Touring Car racing would have provided a welcome change from the largely US-oriented disciplines.

#### PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ 15 different motorsport disciplines on offer
- ✓ 52 mainly real tracks
- ✓ Good opposition AI
- ✓ Varied handling
- ✗ Requires analogue controller
- ✗ The driving experience is slightly homogenised
- ✗ Sub-McRae rally sections

**89**

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# SINGLES: FLIRT UP YOUR LIFE

■ £19.99 | Pub: Deep Silver | Dev: Rotobee | ETA: Out Now |  
[www.singles-the-game.com](http://www.singles-the-game.com)

REQUIRES PIII 1GHz, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card DESIRES P4 2GHz, 512MB RAM and a 128MB 3D card

Steve Hill reaches an all-time low. Or so he thought...



Bizarrely, the scriptwriter has also worked on *Emmerdale*, *Family Affairs* and *Byker Grove*.

**"I CAN'T** get them to fuck." As phone calls to commissioning editors go, it's an unconventional opening gambit, albeit one of the more original excuses for missing a deadline. But with my copy very nearly due, it's the best I can offer. Mr Holden is on the receiving end of my concerns, and 'they' are Enrique and Paris, residents of a rooftop

apartment in a European city in a computer game called *Singles*. If you haven't been following its progress, *Singles* can loosely be described as a relationship 'em up, with the vague aim being to achieve a happy ending for your couple, naturally preceded by some horizontal shenanigans.

## BIRTHDAY SUIT

It had all started so well. Within minutes Paris was butt-naked, thus answering the question that had been on our minds ever since we first encountered the game. The question in question: will there be muff? Absolutely. We're talking tits, arse, fanny, the lot. And for the ladies, an array of unfettered cocks swinging around the monitor with gay abandon. What could possibly go wrong? Lose the clothes, point them in the general direction of each other and watch them go at it like knives.

Alas, it seems that there is more to relationships than naked grappling (not on my watch), and relationships is what *Singles* is all about – although the subtitle *Flirt Up Your Life* hints at what

routine of decking out your apartment with potted plants and irksomely rotating items of furniture. Like the sims in *The Sims*, singles in *Singles* have to eat, piss and shit (praise be for

**"Singles can loosely be called a relationship 'em up – like *The Sims* with shagging"**

it's really about. They might as well have called it *Singles: Have Penetrative Sexual Intercourse*.

Billed as *The Sims* with shagging, the inspiration is clear. Inspiration doesn't do it justice though, as *Singles* is inspired by *The Sims* in the same way that a fake Rolex is inspired by a Rolex. Although here, the second hand would probably be in the shape of an engorged penis.

It's a shameless rip-off, and as such involves the tedious

punctuation) – the similarity is uncanny. Fortunately, you can set the AI to take care of basic bodily functions, thus avoiding the embarrassing mishaps that allegedly made *The Sims* so hilarious.

## CALL OF NATURE

However, more sinister workings are afoot here, as due to some bizarre censorship situation, the characters in *Singles* can't drop their kecks to have a dump. No,

## INPERSPECTIVE

### THE SIMS

Reviewed Issue 87, Score 86%

A near identical experience, except with greater depth and no shagging.

### EROTICA ISLAND

Reviewed Issue 103, Score 10%

Similarly frustrating cartoon sex shenanigans – and about as erotic as dry toast.





Young love, shit hair.

instead they simply sit on the throne fully clothed and presumably fill their pants. No fun for anyone (as I recently found out), and even more unlikely in a game that punishes them for not washing their hands.

Yet more absurd is the fact that should one of the characters be naked when nature calls, they can simply drop the kids off at the pool in the traditional

fashion. We don't understand, and have simply put this down to the game's German origins, the 18-rating presumably covering graphic nudity but not toilet functions apparently...

Bog-trotting aside, in order to get your singles to copulate, you're going to have to play it by the book, progressing from bland chit-chat to mild flirtation to naked animal rutting. Or

as the game would have it, friendship, romance and sensuality, ratings that must all be maxed out before there's any hint of action.

Throw in the fact that your singles also have to hold down jobs, eat, sleep and wash, and it's a painstaking business – the equivalent of getting a pair of Chinese pandas to mate. The seduction process often seems to be happening in real time, proving a laborious affair that will try the resolve of all but the most sex-crazed gamer. It's more a test of patience than an in-depth exercise in social engineering.

#### DOWN 'N' DIRTY

It's not even as if mucky games are anything new, and recent years have seen such tat as *Lula: The Sexy Empire* and *Erotica Island*. Even back in the day we



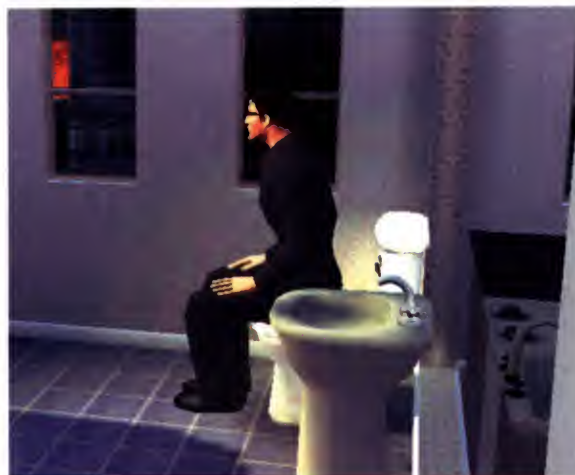
Like two swans on a lake.



Perhaps a little underdressed, but who's complaining?



Where's the soap...

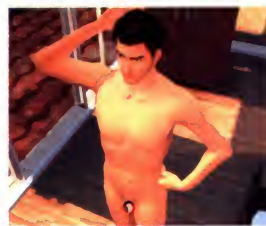


That's what you call touching cloth.

## WOMB RAIDER

### DOES SIZE MATTER?

Obviously we weren't looking, but we couldn't help notice that the size of 'equipment' varies wildly between the male characters. One of these gentlemen was clearly at the front of the queue when it was handed out: we're not sure what queue the other one was even in...



Small is... Well, tiny actually.



Larger than life.

had the likes of *Sam Fox Strip Poker* on the Spectrum.

The big difference then was that erotic material was at a premium: you'd either find a stash of *Razzles* in a lay-by, send your bum-fluffed mate to the video shop for *Electric Blue 17*, or wait for a rare ITV screening of *The Bitch*, the film that sent a generation of teenage boys to school the next day with tennis elbow. Given such sparse fare and crazed hormones, dragging yourself around the

room to a pixelated picture of a page three stunner was a viable option.

These days of course, everyone with an Internet connection has access to more pornography than is physically possible to watch (believe me, I've tried). As such, paying 20 quid in the hope of seeing a pair of cartoon characters getting it on is in the realms of folly, particularly as it's preceded by countless hours of grinding tedium. When the sex finally comes, it's watchable enough, albeit with the crucial areas predictably obscured under the covers. That said, get the cheat mode on and it's hot lesbian action all the way – always a beautiful thing. [X]

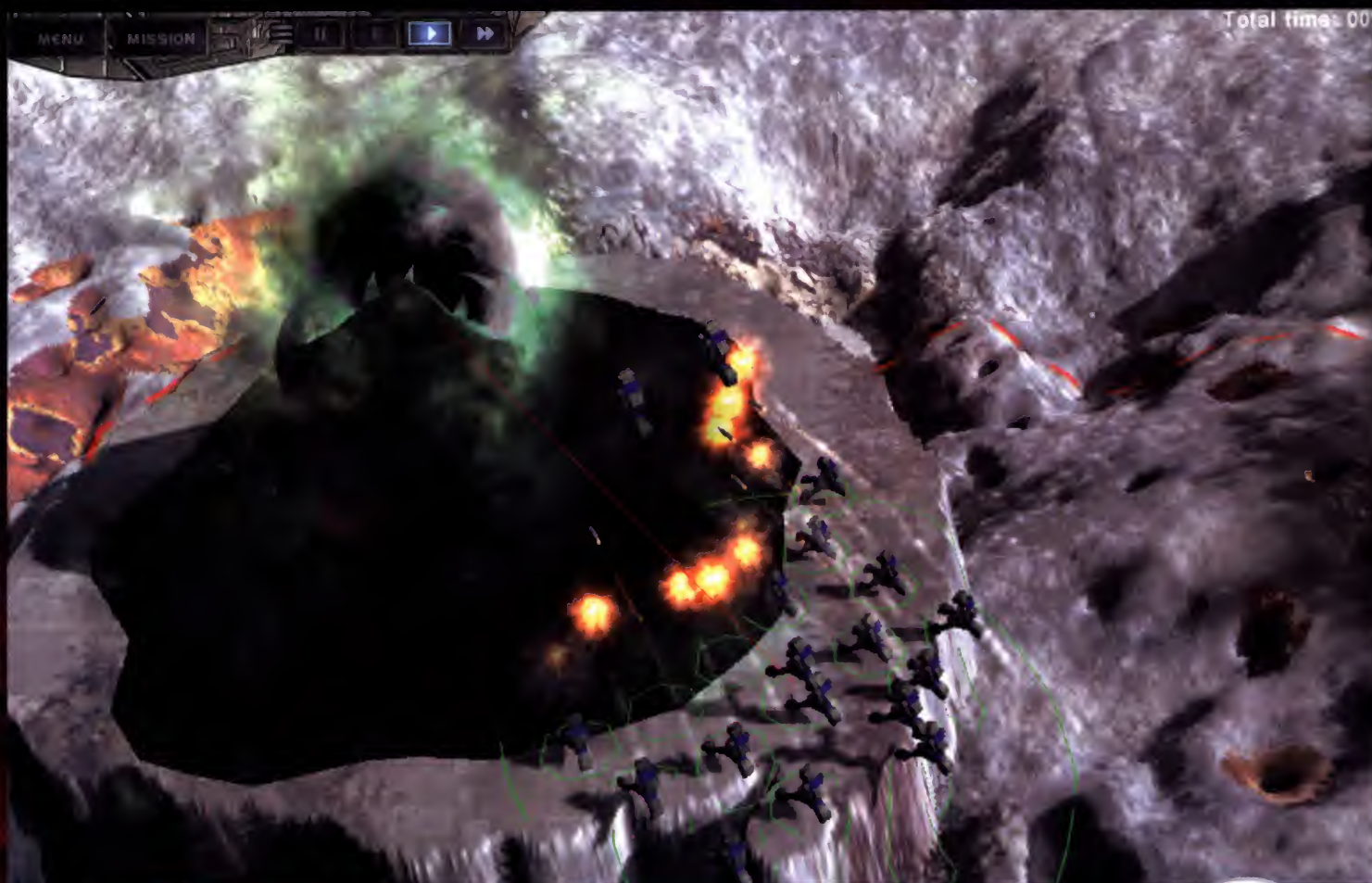
### PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Full-frontal nudity
- ✗ Tedious
- ✗ Derivative
- ✗ Pointless

# 48

The Sims undressed





A scourge nest takes a well-deserved pounding.

# PERIMETER

■ £34.99 | Pub: Codemasters | Dev: K-D Labs | ETA: May 21 | [www.codemasters.co.uk/perimeter](http://www.codemasters.co.uk/perimeter)

REQUIRES PIII 1GHz, 256MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card DESIRES P4 2GHz, 512MB RAM and a 128MB 3D card



The war on terra has begun! Steve O'Hagan signs up for a far-flung mission to reshape the RTS landscape

**HADRIAN** did it to keep the wild Scots out. China did it to fend off the Mongol hordes. The Russkies did it in Berlin to ward off the reactionary capitalist pigs. Indeed, building great big walls to hide behind has long been our first instinct when we feel threatened. And if the vision painted by *Perimeter* is anything to go by, this

practice is set to continue far into the future.

Let me explain. *Perimeter* is an ambitious new real-time strategy game that takes its name from the impermeable energy shield that every base in the game is able to project. Looking something like a quivering mass of proton-charged jelly, this shield is your primary asset in *Perimeter*'s interesting strategic formula.

## A GAME LESS ORDINARY

It may seem unusual for a strategy game to focus on a kind of passive defence, but it's far from being the only unusual aspect of *Perimeter* – not by a long way. In fact, we'd go as far as to say that in terms of both gameplay and setting, this is one of the most adventurous and innovative RTS games we've seen for many a moon. The only question is, does that make it any good to play?

The plot that underpins *Perimeter* is slightly hard to decipher. What we can tell you is that it all takes place in the far, far future. Humankind has spread from the Earth, but managed to overpopulate every planet they've come across. Consequently, and with the help of the Spirits (whoever they are), humanity has built the Frames:

## "Hold your robo-horses, you need to level out some land"

enormous colonisation vessels that house thousands, if not millions of people. Using these Frames, man has crossed into a newly discovered galaxy known as the Psychosphere, where competing human factions vie with each other (and the malevolent local wildlife) for somewhere to call home. Fine, whatever – we'll fight anyone, just point us to the guns.

Hold your robo-horses though, as before anything can be done in *Perimeter*, you need to level out some land. Buildings can only be constructed on land that's been flattened to 'zero level', meaning hills have to be lowered and valleys raised until you have a nice, contour-free plateau to work with.

scurrying black nanobots to the area. Choose a structure from the build menu and slap it on the map, and your Buildmasters automatically spit out little floating dollops of energy that sail over to your new construction, each one bringing it closer to completion.

## BUILD FOR VICTORY

The way this building/terraforming system works means that you never have to control more than five worker units. And what's more, you rarely have to give them direct orders other than switching them between their Buildmaster and Brigadier functions. Like many aspects of the game, this system is initially confusing, but it's focused on eliminating micro-management, leaving you free to concentrate on the bigger picture.

Admittedly, there are one or two issues with the build

## IN PERSPECTIVE

### COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS

Reviewed Issue 127, Score 86%  
If you want an RTS that's as traditional as *Perimeter* is unusual, look no further. This is high-quality, high-gloss stuff that sticks closely to the build-and-rush formula.

### RISE OF NATIONS

Reviewed Issue 129, Score 90%  
Probably the best RTS of the last 12 months, *RoN* may not be as pioneering as *Perimeter*, but its combination of features old and new makes it an essential play.





When two bases begin to encroach on each other, things start to kick off.



A thriving base begins to take shape.



You can see all kinds of activity going on inside the Frame.



Bugger all is getting through that shield.

queues. While you can have as many different types of buildings as you want assigned for simultaneous construction, you can only have one of each type queued, which is no help when you want dozens of a certain structure. Building laser turrets one at a time can become annoying, though it's hardly a deal-breaker.

#### ENERGY DRINK

*Perimeter's* sole resource is energy. Thankfully, you don't have to construct legions of workers to go out and get it – the generator buildings that also create your defence shield do it for you.

This single resource is the key to the game. You want to build or repair a structure or unit? You need energy. You want to power up your perimeter shield? You need energy. A single meter in the centre of the HUD shows how much power you have in

#### WALKTHROUGH →

### POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Getting yourself on the national grid is priority number one in *Perimeter*



**1** Things kick off on a new world with just you and your Frame hovering above the surface. First things first, mark out some land to be terraformed by your Brigadiers.



**2** Once the ground's been flattened, you can land your Frame and assign orders for your first generator to be built.



**3** Generators have to link to each other or the Frame to function, so make sure you build them within the power radius of existing ones.



**4** Once you've got a nice bit of flat land and a good grid in action, you can use your perimeter shield to ward off enemy attacks until your forces are ready.



# WHO GOES THERE?



Mortar units to aerial bombers at the click of a button.

## ANY UNIT IN *PERIMETER* CAN BE MORPHED INTO ANOTHER WITH A SINGLE CLICK

No matter where they are, you can quickly morph any of your troops into a host of different craft and configurations. Scummer units burrow through the earth, boiling the terrain above them as they tunnel, disrupting energy collection and damaging buildings. Leech units drain power from enemy networks, potentially bringing down a perimeter shield. Disintegrators force enemy units to morph back to their basic states, while Unseens cloak nearby friendlies from enemy view.

What this means is that the emphasis in battle, other than trying to outnumber your enemy, is quickly adapting to the situation by morphing your units to match your opponent's capabilities. This requires constant attention to areas of conflict, but by ensuring you've only ever got five squads on the go, *Perimeter* makes this more than possible.

If you're a traditional strategist and like to construct front lines and defend the high ground, it's likely you'll find *Perimeter*'s approach to battle tactics a little obscure. However, if you're open to a new challenge, this is a fascinating diversion from the norm.



Milling around waiting to be morphed into something useful...



Your laser turrets fend off an incursion by the Scourge.



# "A fairly predictable foe, the Scourge pour forth from their nesting holes every so often"



It may look like nonsense, but it could also be our favourite bizarre Russian RTS ever!

When we tell you that the largest your army will ever grow to is five units (or squads), many may pale at the prospect of limited tactical options. But once again, *Perimeter* shows its unusual hand by allowing each of these units to be comprised of countless little soldier, officer and technician battle droids. One click, and these squads move – and fight – as one.

What's more, provided you have the right technologies, these units can be morphed into a whole range of more powerful specialisations, including tanks, aircraft and even vehicles that burrow beneath the ground. Each specialisation requires a different mix of the three basic units, but provided you have them in sufficient quantities, a squad can end up comprising a practically unlimited amount of little battle craft.

Morphing your units takes next to no time. Click the button, listen to the drum 'n' bass-style sub-bass sound effect, watch all those tiny soldiers and technicians liquify like blobs of mercury, and then seconds later your new units are ready. Where a moment ago there were ranks of machine-gun armed basic troopers, there's now a squadron of hovering air-to-air Strafer units. The effect this ability to quickly and entirely change the composition of your army has on tactics is fascinating, though a little hard to get your head round (see 'Who Goes There?', left).

## MORE LEMMINGS!

Early on, your main opponent is the Scourge – the indigenous inhabitants of the Psychosphere. A fairly predictable foe, the Scourge pour forth from their nesting holes every so often and swarm towards your base, running into the nearest structure or unit and exploding like kamikaze space lemmings. The perimeter shield will keep this lot out (although heavy on your energy reserves), until you can construct enough defensive turrets to fend them off.

Pretty soon, though, your major competition comes from the other human factions. With access to the same technologies and units as you, the computer AI fast becomes a tricky foe, making the Scourge seem little worse than a dose of space crabs.

None of *Perimeter*'s maps are particularly big, meaning

This portal enables you to travel to the next world.

reserve, and the rate at which it's growing or shrinking.

Each generator draws power from the land around it – provided it's been terraformed to zero level. This makes levelled ground precious in itself. Indeed, many of the game's more advanced weapon systems specialise in breaking up the land, wrecking the enemy's ability to generate power and construct buildings.

## FAMOUS FIVE

The approach *Perimeter* takes to reducing micro-management in terraforming and construction is matched in the way you control your combat units.





The little spider scourge marching towards your base...



The landscapes are a little different from Rickmansworth.



Some missions require you to link your power network to a structure on the other side of the map.



An interconnected network of worlds – why can't we choose which one to hit next?

### THE CHOICES STOP WHEN THE MISSION IS OVER

*Perimeter* is set in the Psychosphere, a system of worlds connected like a complicated atomic structure. Each completed mission in the campaign game enables you to progress to the next world – but you have no choice as to which one. The design of the Psychosphere is excellent, and each world has more than one link to others, so it's a shame you don't even get to make the most elementary choices between missions. This campaign is linear with a capital 'L'.

battles with enemy bases very quickly become confused, tooth-and-nail fights for survival. It's an interesting dynamic, as both sides extend their power and defence networks towards each other, looking to break into the opponent's infrastructure, capture energy cores and disable vital buildings. As your defences crawl towards each other, nanobots levelling the terrain as they go, the tangled combat gives off the feel of a far-flung First World War.

Visually, *Perimeter* is vivid and pulsating, showcased by an excellent 3D engine. Crackling energy beams link your generators, the ground surface is tangibly textured and pock-marked, and rockets and laser beams fill the sky when things kick off. Shadows, reflections and dynamic lighting all combine to good effect, and graphics-wise, there's really little more you could ask for from a game of this nature.

Power generators have to be built within each other's energy radius.

This visual élan is matched by some superb sound effects, from some pretty decent voice-acting to the riotous roar of battle. The audio range matches up well with the deeply futuristic feel of the game, and the resulting atmosphere is impressive.

### THE FUTURE OF RTS?

*Perimeter* is a technically excellent game, and you've got to give it to the developers for blowing away the cobwebs and trying to do something different. It's a fascinating, intricate and challenging sci-fi strategy title, and we're looking forward to seeing how it fares online.

Despite all that, the game does lack a certain warmth. With all these nanobots, power fields, alien landscapes and morphing robotic troopers, there's not much to latch on to, to identify with – especially early on. At times, you can feel as alienated by it all as the colonists crammed into their hulking Frames, hovering over hostile alien worlds and wondering if they'll see the blue globe of Earth ever again. Anyone who likes some sort of a hero, or even a few familiar reference points will feel a little on the outside.

It's also easy to feel a little lost and confused in the midst of a battle. Without many of the



### SECOND OPINION

Although *Perimeter* follows the same basic premise as most RTS games – harvest resources, build an army and raze your opponent to the ground – it nevertheless feels different from every other RTS I've played. Neat little touches like the terraforming and the organic landscapes carve *Perimeter* its own little niche, but the real novelty is found in the ability to morph your troops. From snipers and rocket troops through to the more unique burrowing and sabotage units, there's endless variety here, and you have to constantly reappraise your deployment in line with the state of play. It puts the focus firmly back on that oft-overlooked aspect of the genre – tactics.

If you like your RTS games, but are getting a bit bored of the same ol' same ol', you'd be hard-pressed to find a more refreshing and distinctive title.

traditional indicators of success – control over resources, size of army and so on – it's bloody hard to gauge the balance of power at any given time.

For all its fascinating gameplay mechanics, *Perimeter* isn't quite one of those un-putdownable strategy games that you simply can't tear yourself away from, despite the fact that it's 4.30am on Monday morning and you're due at work in four hours. It is, however, an ambitious, pioneering effort that has plenty to offer the dedicated real-time strategy player. If you appreciate its ultra hi-tech scenario, you'll find plenty of enjoyment here. **PCZ**

### PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Innovative and impressive unit morphing system...
- ✓ ...Which encourages you to use different kinds of tactics
- ✓ Micro-management minimised
- ✓ Spectacular visuals
- ✗ Occasionally baffling
- ✗ Linear campaign

# 81

A weird and wonderful RTS that definitely pushes boundaries



# LORDS OF THE REALM III

■ £19.99 | Pub: VU Games | Dev: Impressions Games | ETA: Out Now | [games.sierra.com/games/lordsIII](http://games.sierra.com/games/lordsIII)

**REQUIRES** PIII 800, 128MB RAM and a 16MB 3D Card **DESIRES** P4 1.5GHz, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D Card

**There's an evil scourge sweeping the realm and Steve O'Hagan is revolting**



Storming castles provides one of the game's less awful points.



There are better examples of strategic maps.



The excitement is bearable.



You have no control over which units make up your armies.



When the troops clash in the real-time battles, it looks like this.

**THERE** are certain omens that bode ill for the release of a game. The first is when a new title gets a £20 price tag. Too often, this means that everyone involved knows full well that serious incentives will be needed to shift their substandard title. The second is when a publisher

withholds review copies of the game until just days before its release. Nine times out of ten this means it's so scared of what reviewers might say, it'd rather people saw no reviews at all.

Well, the god-awful *Lords Of The Realm III* fits the bill on both these counts, and never has a theory been so comprehensively vindicated. This is a medieval shit sandwich, and boy did those responsible know it.

re-writing to a particularly cretinous village idiot.

The game runs in laboriously slow real-time. The map is divided into 'parcels' or regions, each of which can be assigned a vassal. Depending on their area of specialisation, your vassals will create money, food, religious fervour or an army. This is the only economic decision you make – which vassals to place in which regions. You can't

the enemy. Even a clear understanding of where each region begins or ends is hard to muster, as the border demarcations are unintelligible. Indeed, easy to digest information is at a premium everywhere in *LOTR3*.

God knows what happened to *LOTR3*, but the usually dependable Impressions Games has lost the plot on this one. Even if you're a long-standing fan of the series – no, especially if you are one – avoid this like a bearded, Black Death-infected Saxon whore. [C-]

## INPERSPECTIVE

### MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR

Reviewed Issue 120, Score 90%

This is the game that *Lords III* is closest to in spirit, if not in class. *Medieval* has stood astride our Strategy A-List since its release for good reason – its absorbing turn-based strategic aspect married to visceral, blood 'n' thunder real-time battles.

### CIVILIZATION III

Reviewed Issue 111, Score 86%

If you just want to build up an empire and manage its every aspect through a sleek and intuitive interface, *Civ's* the only answer. A monumental turn-based strategy game that will go down in history as the finest of its genre.

## “Avoid this like a bearded, Black Death-infected Saxon whore”

The first thing to get round is that this third instalment bares little relation to its predecessors, the second of which was very good (we gave it 80 per cent way back in issue 47). Other than the fact it too depicts medieval kings, barons and dukes vying for control of territory, it's like they ripped up the rule book for *LOTR3* and entrusted its

construct buildings, research technologies, build troops, raise taxes – nothing. OK, so it's an interesting take on reducing micro-management, but it takes you so far away from the decision-making process you might as well be retired.

Keeping track of your armies is ridiculously hard too, as is assessing strengths relative to

## LORD SAVE US

Armies (automatically generated when you place a knight vassal in a region) crawl round the map until they bump into each other, triggering combat. Which is where the game's new-fangled 3D RTS engine comes into play. The less said about this the better, which is worrying as it forms the focus of the game. OK, it has a few of the sleeker elements made common by better RTS titles, but it also has almost nothing new, a truly limited tactical palette and visuals that only look anywhere half-decent when shown static, the size of a postage stamp, on the back of the game box.

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ It's ten quid cheaper than most games
- ✓ Cuts back on micro-management
- ✗ Awful documentation and tutorial
- ✗ Terrible presentation
- ✗ Mystifying interface
- ✗ Abysmal RTS elements

# 19

Oh lord, what have we done to deserve this?





"Well, fancy meeting you here..."



They always said he was the brainy one.



Before lighting cigarette, lift visor.

# RAINBOW SIX 3: ATHENA SWORD

REQUIRES FULL  
VERSION OF  
RAINBOW SIX 3:  
RAVEN SHIELD

■ £19.99 | Pub: Ubisoft | Dev: Ubisoft Milan | ETA: Out Now  
[www.raven-shield.com/athenasword.php](http://www.raven-shield.com/athenasword.php)

REQUIRES PIII 800, 128MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card DESIRES P4 1.3GHz, 512MB RAM and a 128MB 3D card

Ubisoft's random name generator gets another workout as  
**Martin Korda infiltrates the new Raven Shield expansion pack**

**IT'S 2007.** Gareth Gates tops the charts, Jordan's still thrusting her silicon twins at every passing camera lens and the world is once again threatened by a chemical weapon-toting madman and his equally insane minions. Business as usual then.

*Athena Sword*, like *Raven Shield* before it, pits you against the last of these three blights, as you attempt to thwart the plans

of crazed Argentinean minister and chief bad guy from *Rainbow Six 3*, Alvaro Gutierrez. Although pitting the *Rainbow Six* boys against Katie Price's bazookas would have been an interesting confrontation...

The new campaign comprises an eight-mission anti-terror battle that sees you gunning down would-be bombers in a variety of sunny continental locales including Italy and Greece. With the majority of the action again taking place in claustrophobic enclosed areas however, you won't have much of a chance to top up your tan.

## DÉJÀ VU

So, what's new? Or should that be, what's not? Because for all its taut excitement, *Athena Sword* has little to distinguish it from its predecessor. Levels are still slow-paced and tense, enemies are still reasonably intelligent and your team-mates are still occasionally idiotic. British accents are, of course,

ropey, and every mission is as hard as a diamond (but luckily just as polished).

There are seven new weapons to try out, including a couple of hugely satisfying machine guns and assault rifles, plus a host of solid new multiplayer/custom mission maps. But ultimately, none of these

features add much to the *Raven Shield* experience beyond cosmetic tweaks.

It's somewhat telling then that *Athena Sword*'s best new single-player feature is a straightforward but incredibly effective new game mode called Countdown. And while this sadly doesn't involve you

gunning down Richard Whitely, it does add a ticking clock to each mission, making the already all-consuming tension almost unbearable. And that's a good thing why, you ask?

## I'LL TELL YOU WHY...

Because suddenly, creeping round every corner at crawling speed is no longer an option and you're left to rely far more heavily on a keen eye and accurate shot, as well as being forced to make crucial split-second decisions throughout.

Also featuring are five new multiplayer modes, including a manic multiplayer version of Countdown, but

mostly these are mere variations of existing modes. There were next to no servers up for these at time of writing, so we'll have to reserve final judgement, but expect a full online review in the near future. There are also three revamped 'Classic' missions from *Rainbow Six* games of old, which will raise a nostalgic smile if you're a veteran of the series.

Ultimately, *Athena Sword* is a great game, although being so similar to *Raven Shield*, it couldn't really fail to be. The problem is, it doesn't offer enough to warrant anything approaching the same score. It's entertaining in all the right ways, but just like Gates and Price, it's all a bit too predictable. [C]

## INPERSPECTIVE

### GHOST RECON

Reviewed Issue 110, Score 86%  
Much like *Rainbow Six* in essence, only with massive open levels and military rather than SWAT-style operations. Available at a budget price, it's a better and cheaper alternative to this.

### COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO

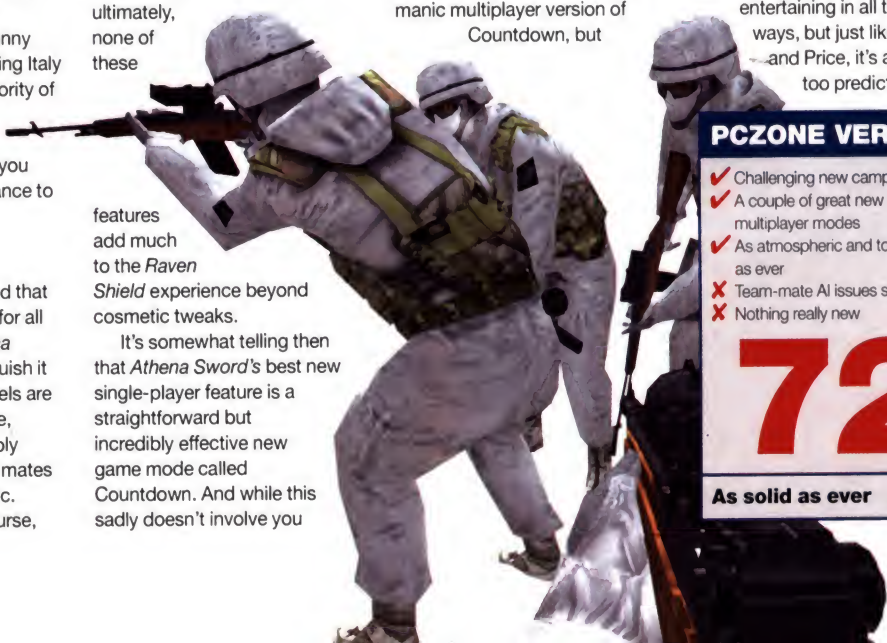
Reviewed Issue 140, Score 83%  
Offering a challenging single-player campaign and still one of the best online shooters around, *Condition Zero* is a must if you're still not wired up to the *Counter-Strike* universe.

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Challenging new campaign
- ✓ A couple of great new multiplayer modes
- ✓ As atmospheric and tough as ever
- ✗ Team-mate AI issues still persist
- ✗ Nothing really new

# 72

As solid as ever







You can zoom in for a close-up of the action.

# PRO RUGBY MANAGER 2004

£34.99 | Pub: Digital Jesters | Dev: Cyanide Studios | ETA: Out Now | [www.prorugbymanager.com](http://www.prorugbymanager.com)

REQUIRES PIII 500, 128MB RAM and a 16MB 3D card DESIRES PIII 600, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card

**Steve Hill gets into a ruck with this flashy new egg-chasing sim**

ON November 22 2003, sporting history was made. And before Chester City's impressive 1-1 draw at Aldershot, there was the small matter of Jonny Wilkinson punting an egg over the bar to win the Rugby World Cup for England. The streets of Wimbledon and Richmond teemed with drunken, homoerotically charged toffs spewing all over the pavement after eight pints of 'wallop'. On the team's return to Blighty, previously disinterested females screamed their approval and the country rejoiced in unfamiliar glory. Six months on and England have been restored to their traditional mantle of plucky losers.

It's also taken approximately six months for the cash-in games to come trickling in, including *Pro Rugby Manager 2004*. Not that we're suggesting it's been thrown together with undue haste in the wake of

England's victory, as this is anything but a shallow experience, despite being a little rough around the edges. The Spectrum-esque production values are arguably endearing, although the wispy font is erring on the side of unpleasant.

## HERE'S JONNY!

As a vague overview, *Pro Rugby Manager 2004* is attempting to do for rugger what *Championship Manager* has done for footy. The key difference here is that the matches are represented via real-time 3D graphics as opposed to words and blobs. And while you don't actively control the players in the manner of an action game, there's far more to a match than simply sitting back and watching your tactics flounder.

In fact, the matches keep you constantly involved as you bark a near-continuous stream of orders to your players, be it to work the ball out wide, advance the scrum or go for that glory-seeking drop goal. While this



Play by numbers.

hands-on approach does add to the involvement, it's far from perfect as the pace of the game is often too quick to exert a great deal of real control, particularly given the somewhat irksome mouse-based system. There's even the option to give orders to individual players, but again this is a hit-and-miss

affair, with your commands often going unnoticed. Off the pitch, it's a hardcore management sim, with an array of player attributes that will make even a hardened *Champ Man* fan flinch. The



England and France see who can jump highest.



Tactics work like a football management game.



Where's the goalkeeper?

statistics are truly bewildering and presented in such a way as to prove almost useless to all but the most autistic of gamers. As well as team affairs, the game also enables you to dabble with the facilities, including improving the training ground, expanding the club shop and even overhauling the press room in the hope of attracting more fans.

## ODD-SHAPED BALLS

It's all fairly hard going, and such an ugly game is unlikely to convert non-rugby fans in the manner of Wilkinson's drop kick. In fact, those without an in-depth knowledge of the sport will find themselves in difficulty, as it's

just too impenetrable for casual fans, particularly at this price. Looks like they'll have to wait until the next World Cup. **PCZ**

## INPERSPECTIVE

**RUGBY 2004**  
Not reviewed

A more polished version of the sport, albeit without the in-depth management options.

**CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER:**  
SEASON 03/04

Reviewed Issue 137, Score 90%  
A different shaped ball, but this is still the definitive sports management game.

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Comprehensive
- ✓ Involving match action
- ✗ Monotonous commentary
- ✗ Patchy presentation
- ✗ Misspelt names

# 60

Hard-boiled fan service





More modern war machines is one of the few differences from *Sudden Strike 2*.



The supply system is tactically sound.



D-Day, anyone?



The two-year-old graphics are almost charming. Almost.

# COLD WAR CONFLICTS

■ £29.99 | Pub: GMX Media | Dev: Red Ice | ETA: Out Now | [www.cwc-game.com](http://www.cwc-game.com)

**REQUIRES** PII 500, 128MB RAM and a 16MB graphics card **DESIRES** PIII 700, 256MB RAM, 32MB graphics card and an Internet connection

**Sudden Strike without the Germans? Richie Shoemaker wants to come in from the cold**

**IN SOMETHING** of a confusing situation for literalists, real-time strategy game *Cold War Conflicts* sets out to recreate all the least cold bits of the Cold War. So you've got battles from The Korean War, the second Arab-Israeli conflict and the Yom Kippor offensive of 1973. No Vietnam though, which is a curious omission considering it remains not only the most eminent of all the Cold War conflicts, but also the trendiest place to set a game since the medieval dungeon.

The reason for this apparent oversight seemingly stems from the game engine, which has been taken wholesale from

*Sudden Strike 2*, warts and all. A single glance at the screenshots should confirm this – *Cold War Conflicts* could easily be confused for an add-on pack to the two-year-old RTS. As a result we have the same pernicky mouse control system, with troops that are not only difficult to distinguish from one another, but at times impossible to make out against the battlefield. Throw a dense Asian jungle into the mix and you'd have a bloodbath on your hands.

Not that the game engine is any more suited to the battles it does try to portray. The flat pseudo-isometric terrain of *Sudden Strike 2* is retained, which does little to promote Korea's infamous and bloody hilltop engagements. More obvious is that *SS2*'s graphics were hardly cutting edge at the time and if anything, *CWC*'s graphics are marginally worse. The new and updated units fit in

well enough but the maps lack visible depth and cohesion. Worse still, some of the required visual effects, such as whirling 'copter blades, appear not to have been attempted at all.

## FOR FANS ONLY

It may seem unfair to keep harping on about *Sudden Strike 2*, but essentially *Cold War*

*Conflicts* is the same game with new units and voices.

That said, the formula is still an enjoyable one, offering battles that are as strategic as any outside of the *Total War* series. Instead of worrying about constructing bases and mining ore, the resource system is based on managing supplies, which puts the emphasis firmly

back on military matters.

Moreover, the ability to assault and control buildings compensates to some extent for the featureless terrain you're forced to war across.

The Cold War setting also offers a slight shift from massed infantry battles to more modern long-range rocket attacks and explosive helicopter assaults, and as such there's probably enough here to recommend the game to *Sudden Strike* fans. However, for most it will be a tall order to overlook the crude graphics, let alone forgive the punishing difficulty levels and total exclusion of Skirmish options. Sure, it's nice to be offered a new historical setting for our RTS pursuits, but it's hardly a good reason to choose this game over one of the many better options cramming the shelves. **[B-]**



Don't jump! You're barely above free height, man!



"Sorry I'm late. Tanks on the track again..."



Doesn't look that cold...

## INPERSPECTIVE

### BLITZKREIG

Reviewed Issue 129, Score 84%

For all intents and purposes this game is 'Sudden Strike 3'. Set deep in WWII, it covers much the same tactical ground, though with better troop control and superior graphics. *Cold War Conflicts*' battles might be bigger, but *Blitzkrieg* is ultimately the more rewarding game.

### C&C GENERALS

Reviewed Issue 127, Score 86%

Although the *Command & Conquer* series has traditionally catered for the fast-action crowd, the near-future setting of *Generals* plus the attractive 3D graphics may just sway the more dedicated strategists. Just be prepared to do some harvesting before you can fly those MiGs.

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Original Cold War setting
- ✓ Tried and tested formula
- ✗ Identical to *Sudden Strike 2*
- ✗ Flat terrain
- ✗ No skirmish option
- ✗ Fussy controls

# 69

**Sudden Strike 2.5**



# IL-2: FORGOTTEN BATTLES – ACE EXPANSION PACK

FULL VERSION OF  
IL-2: FORGOTTEN  
BATTLES REQUIRED

■ £14.99 | Pub: Ubisoft | Dev: 1C Maddox Games  
| ETA: Out Now

**REQUIRES** PIII 800, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card  
**DESIRES** P4 1.8GHz, 512MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

**Paul Presley has more aces up his sleeve than a cheating riverboat gambler**

**GOOD OLD** *IL-2*: single-handedly keeping the flight simulation market alive in the face of all rational logic. It's amazing how the groans fly around the office when I announce a LAN server is up – groans from the same folk who'll happily run around in black cat-suits pretending to be gymnastic secret agents from the future. I ask you, who has the unhealthier fantasy life? At least my pretend planes have an actual basis in reality...

The *Ace Expansion Pack*, aside from its presumptuous

nomenclature, offers the happy *IL-2* pilot much: over 30 new planes, a handful of new missions and campaigns in all new territories, some updated coding in AI areas and, er, that's about it. Everything is of the traditionally high *IL-2* standards and is comparable qualitywise to what was in *Forgotten Battles*, even if there isn't all that much of it.

Having said that, it is only 15 nicker. Some may argue that games should cost that much anyway, but that's an argument for another time. For the price, what's here is adequate enough.



We've got a little tip for you, Fritz!



Here comes trouble.

*AEP* fulfils the expansion pack remit to the letter. New units, new maps, a bit of under-the-hood tinkering and no major alteration of the fundamental structure of the original. Because of that last factor, it's hard to recommend this to anyone other than the avid completist. Then again, if there's one genre that attracts more of that ilk than any other, this is it.

**PCZONE  
VERDICT** **68**

All good,  
nothing essential



Who needs an entire plane anyway?

## THE CAT IN THE HAT

■ £19.99 | Pub: VU Games | Dev: Digital Eclipse Software | ETA: Out Now

**REQUIRES** PIII 600, 128MB RAM and a 16MB 3D card  
**DESIRES** That'll pretty much handle things smoothly

**Sixteen years in the biz and it's come to this? Ah well. Paul Presley draws a deep breath...**

**THE CAT** *In The Hat*

is now on the loose and we need a review in the style of Dr Seuss. I would not, should not, write these words. A 'joke' like this is for the birds. I will not write it at my desk, I will not write it in my vest. I will not write it, not no way. (You won't get paid – Ed.) Shit, OK.

Platforms and jumping, all that sort of farce. Based on the film though, so lacking in class. You are the Cat, cleaning your mess. *Sonic* meets *Mario* but markedly less. Goo-balls, bubbles, Thing 2 and Thing 1. But no Michael Myers whose voice costs a ton. Alec Baldwin turns up though, destroying his cred. Though why should he

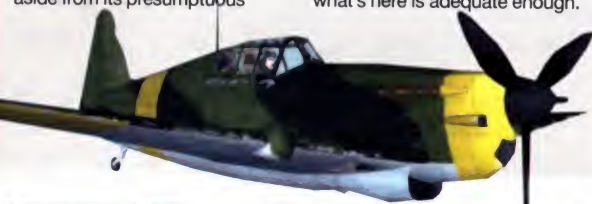
care with Kim Basinger in bed?

They say it's for kids, but kids can't be fooled. They're all into hip-hop, you marketing tools. A shameless cash-in is the path they have taken. To the lowest of hells their souls are forsaken. The coders, the woders, the artists and suits. The marketers, sharketers, fat cats and klutes. Nobody cares that this is just trash, everyone just wants a big pile of cash.

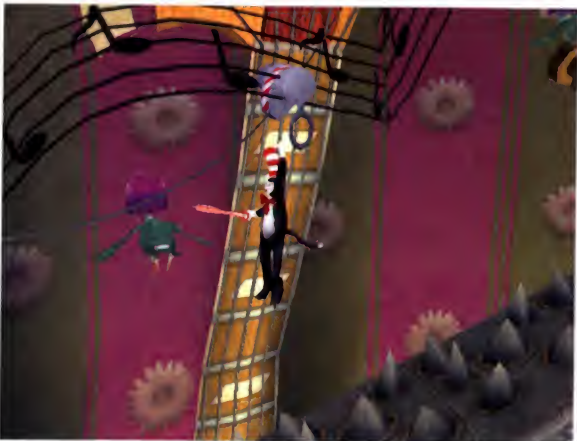
*The Cat In The Hat?* A book filled with wit. As for the game, a big pile of sh... (Fired – Ed.)

**PCZONE  
VERDICT** **30**

Fit for the litter tray



I will not play this in a plane...



...I will not play this in a drain.







Maybe 'whites of their eyes' was a little ambitious...

# KNIGHTS OF THE TEMPLE

■ £19.99 | Pub: TDK Mediactive |  
Dev: Starbreeze Studios | ETA: Out Now

**REQUIRES** PIII 1GHz, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card  
**DESIRES** P4 1.8GHz, 512MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

**Hack, smite, chop, snore. Anthony Holden crusades for better games**

## OBSELESCENCE

is a concept that we PC users should be all too familiar with. New PCs are obsolete before they're even thought of, generations of graphics come and go like so many Beckham hairdos and tomorrow's

technologies usually arrive around lunchtime last Tuesday.

So how is it that we've somehow managed to let an entire genre slip through the net unnoticed? The hack 'n' slash genre is past it, geriatric, anachronistic. It should have

taken itself out into the snow to perish years ago, making room in the igloo for another genre to flourish. The last really good example we had was *Severance* back in 2001, and even that was only saved by its nice shadowy bits.

As it happens, *Knights Of The Temple* isn't even a particularly great hack 'n' slash game. The selection of combos is poor, the AI basic and the environments

repetitive. The best thing about it is the motion capture, which is high quality stuff and makes for some fluid medieval exchanges, but otherwise the combat is the dreary button-mashing that plagues this whole crippled genre. And what's worse, you can't move and block at the same time, something I've always found unforgivable.

But I wouldn't care if this was the best goddamn hack 'n' slash

game in the world, as this genre is defunct. It's tiresome, unchallenging and artistically bankrupt, and there's no reason in the world to patronise it when you've got the likes of *Jedi Academy*, *Soul Reaver 2* or even *Dungeon Siege* on the market.

**PCZONE  
VERDICT**

**40**

Past its sell-by date



There's plenty of blood, but it doesn't make this genre any more colourful.

# TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

■ £29.99 | Pub: Konami | Dev: Konami | ETA: Out Now

**NINJA** Turtles are great aren't they? Donatello with his cool Bo Staff, Michelangelo and his whizzing nunchuks - he rocks! Then there's Raphael and his twin Sai Blades which are ace and Leonardo's wicked too.

The Story mode is fab: you get to kill loads of baddies, including little frog robots, ninjas and huge boss robots. And the graphics are great - it looks just like the new cartoons and everything. Plus, it's really good, 'cos you just keep hitting the

button and you can kill all the baddies easily. There are some extra moves you can learn, but *Tekken* is better for fighting. But *Turtles* is still great...

My dad thinks this game is rubbish and he said bad words about it, but he likes boring games anyway. I wanted to give it loads per cent, but he wouldn't let me. He's rubbish.

Louis Shoemaker, age 3

**PCZONE VERDICT**

**55**



"For God's sake man, do you have any idea how daft you look in that hat?"

# SCHIZM II: CHAMELEON

■ £29.99 | Pub: Mindscape | Dev: The Adventure Company | ETA: Out Now

**WHAT'S** the difference between *Schizm II* and *Uru: Ages Beyond Myst*? Answer: one is a graphically lush adventure filled with a pseudo-futuristic hippy plot and obtuse logic puzzles. The other is... Erm, exactly that. Damn.

But hang on, there is a difference. It's the difference between a game that I'd recommend playing to anyone interested in intellectual stimulation and a game that's called *Schizm II*. Basically, while obscure, the puzzle content in *Uru* does at

least gel with the game's carefully constructed universe. The puzzles fit.

In *Schizm*, you're given puzzles purely for the purpose of breaking up the lengthy FMV sequences telling the (admittedly quite intriguing) story of two tribes at war. Some may ask: "Why's everything gotta fit?" Because that's how things work, you idiot. *Schizm II* just doesn't fit.

Paul Presley

**PCZONE VERDICT**

**48**



The Turtles sound exactly like they do on the telly!



# SPARTAN

■ £29.99 | Pub: Just Play | Dev: Slitherine Software | ETA: Out Now

**REQUIRES** PIII 366, 128MB RAM and a 16MB 3D card

**DESIRES** PIII 800, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card

**It's epic and set in ancient Greece, but Steve O'Hagan preferred Grease 2...**

**IN THE** dictionary, under 'spartan' it says, 'something simple or austere'. Which is apt for this basic turn-based empire builder. Ironically, the word also means 'courageous in the face

of pain' – just the attribute the game's designers will need as their earnest efforts are henceforth rubbished.

Set in ancient Greece, you build up cities, conduct



Look! It's like Rome: Total War. Except shit.



The strategy map looks OK, but it's a thin veneer.



Interesting, eh?



No really, come back...

research, muster armies and interact with other nations through diplomacy and trade. There's a long list of resources to produce, and much of your time is spent fiddling with your workforce and trading arrangements to maintain stocks.

All your efforts are ultimately designed to build up an all-conquering army – and the prospect of employing the host of units in the 3D, real-time tactical battles is enticing to

begin with. Unfortunately, the reality is anything but.

Engagements mostly consist of deploying your units in a long line and giving each one a single, simple order such as 'hold' or 'charge'. Then you sit back and watch as the battle unfolds, unable to control any of your troops.

The two armies scuttle forward, forming an unsightly, amorphous blob in the middle, before scattering in all directions

when it's over. Any prior notion of tactics is out the window, as only trial and error reveals the effects of the bizarre and minimal input you're allowed.

Limited and uninspiring, *Spartan* won't satisfy anyone with an inkling of the quality of other games on the market.

**PCZONE VERDICT**

**33**

**Bleak and uninspiring**

# FAST LANES BOWLING

■ £9.99 | Pub: Enlight Software | Dev: LAB Rats Games  
ETA: Out Now

**I'M IN** trouble. There's a new sheriff in town and he's impounded me in the reviewer's dungeon for "criminally underrating *Max Payne 2*".

On the surface though, it doesn't seem too bad down here. My cellmate seems like a competent simulation of ten-pin bowling, with decent physics and authentic sounds. "So, what are you in here for?" "Nothing really my

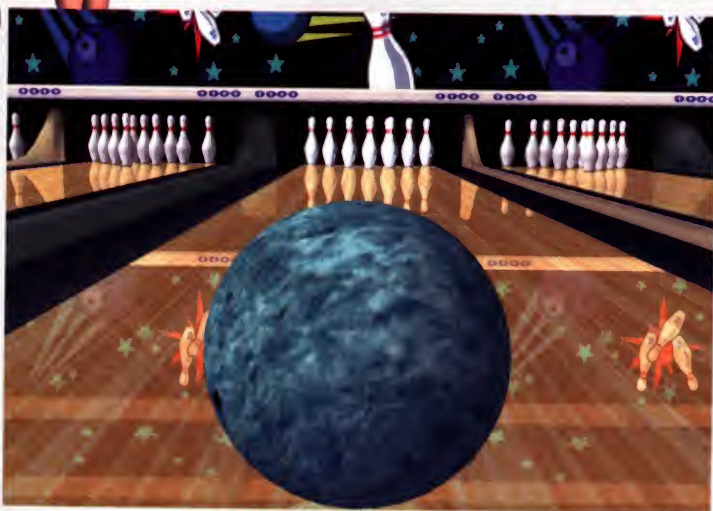
friend, just an archaic tri-click method of delivery, a truly awful interface, a bunch of sorry camera angles and some ridiculous environments/opponents for you to play in/against." Shit, I think I'd rather take my chances with a murderer.

OK, it's only a tennner, but I'd advise you to save three of them and buy a copy of *Max Payne 2*, the best game in the world. Did you hear that Ant? Ant? Can I come out now please?

Dave Woods

**PCZONE VERDICT**

**42**



We certainly weren't bowled over by this game, it's no pin-up etc etc...



Did we say how terrible the character animations were? Well, they are.

# SPELLS OF GOLD

■ £19.99 | Pub: Oxygen Interactive | Dev: Jonquil Software | ETA: Out Now

**'THE GREATEST** trading game since *Elite*! it boasts on the back of the cover to this fantasy RPG, which, in the absence of evidence to suggest you might be flying through space dispensing with Thargoids, is clearly misleading.

To the credit of the marketing minds behind this, trading is by far the game's best feature, as you shuffle between whimsical medieval cities buying and selling goods for profit. However, *Spells Of Gold* is little more than a poor relation

to *Divine Divinity*, with simplistic combat, a poorly delivered story and an interface less sophisticated than the ancient *Elite*.

It's almost like the developer has taken a shabby old isometric RPG, removed the central storyline and replaced all the side-quests with banal cash-based courier missions. By *Elite* standards, this isn't even competent.

Richie Shoemaker

**PCZONE VERDICT**

**27**



All the towns look the same.



A big crack. How appropriate.



# SONIC ADVENTURE DX DIRECTOR'S CUT

■ £29.99 | Pub: Sega | Dev: Sonic Team | ETA: Out Now

**REQUIRES** PIII 600, 128MB RAM and a 16MB 3D card

**DESIRES** PIII 800, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card

**A hypersonic hedgehog tries to pull a fast one on Anthony Holden, but he's having none of it**



It's as gorgeous as ever, but only partially interactive.



Damn that Eggman!

**IT'S A SAD** state of affairs, but our cutting-edge PCs have become convenient dumping grounds for yesterday's Dreamcast hits. The latest title to be dusted off and shoved in a DVD case is 1999's fondly-remembered *Sonic Adventure*.

Before we go on, we can assure you the 'Director's Cut' tag is nothing more than a shallow attempt to make the game look less dated, the supposed 'host of special features' translating to a new mission mode and a few playable Easter Eggs in the form of even more old *Sonic* games. The effort is not unappreciated, but this is still a five-year-old game, re-issued for a price that would fetch you an entire room full of Dreamcasts on Ebay. Or indeed, a real hedgehog.



Despite all this, it's not an entirely unwelcome offering. The original was perhaps the best of all the *Sonic* games, boasting some dizzyingly fast and beautifully staged action levels – and even five years on, the visuals haven't lost their lustre.

Like most of the *Sonic* games, actual interaction is at a premium, and most of the action stages can be negotiated by holding forwards and occasionally leaning left or right – but they're no less exhilarating for it. The 'adventure'

parts of the game are less impressive, mostly involving wandering around looking for the next action stage, but the whole thing remains fun and undemanding nonetheless.

If this *Sonic* game had been released as part of a 'Best Of Dreamcast' line-up for a fiver, we'd have welcomed it like an old friend.

As it is, it's more like an old friend has turned up wanting that 30 quid back that you swear you gave him in 1999.

**PCZONE  
VERDICT**

**62**

Almost worth a spin



Must remember to put the bin out tomorrow.

## MIDNIGHT NOWHERE

■ £19.99 | PUB: Oxygen Interactive | DEV: Saturn+ | ETA: Out Now

**REQUIRES** PII 400, 64MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card

**DESIRES** PIII 733, 128MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

**Will Porter gets on the trail of an exceedingly rude serial killer**



Not looking good for her.

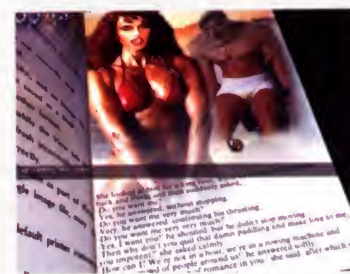


He's at it again...

**YOU KNOW** a game is trying really hard to offend you when the opening scene has the lead character mumbling about a dead woman in a body bag having great tits. From the casual swearing to the pilfering of batteries from dead women's vibrators, the developers of *Midnight Nowhere* try so ridiculously hard to offend you that it almost becomes quite endearing after a while.

I stress the 'almost', because the end product is a tactless, laboured point-and-clicker riddled with fundamental gameplay flaws. When you get stuck, it's not because of the game's intricate puzzles – it's because there are invisible, unmarked pockets on a dead nurse that are as tiny and unclickable as a gnat's chuff. Puzzles are illogical and so frustrating that I *guarantee* that no-one will complete it without cheating. Or having a nervous breakdown.

There's no denying the atmosphere is intriguing. I honestly tried to enjoy the



Glorified jazz mag, anyone?

gratuitousness of the whole thing, but unfortunately, the game wouldn't let me. It's dull, mistranslated, claustrophobic (in a bad way) and thoroughly aimless. No amount of naked women adorning the walls can disguise the fact that *Midnight Nowhere* simply isn't much fun.

**PCZONE  
VERDICT**

**41**

A road to nowhere



# REPLAY

The place to go when you've got no dough

## CIVILIZATION II

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now

### AH, CIVILIZATION II.

Simple enough to be understood by slack-jawed shooter boys; deep enough to ensnare the diplomatic bastard in us all and addictive enough to ensure that entire neural systems are focused on the



Hang on, that doesn't look right.

promotion of crop irrigation in agricultural areas.

Now available as a super-budget release, *Civilization II* is quite simply one of the greatest strategy games of all time. Still, it is some eight years old now (believe it or not), and to be honest you'd be better off buying *Civ III*, which can generally be snaffled off the Net for less than 20 quid. However, if you're pushed for money, somehow missed out on it the first time round and are willing to surrender many hours of sleep, then of course *Civ II* should be added to your games collection immediately.

Much imitated and rarely bettered, *Civ II* stands tall in the hall of gaming greats. If you need a quick, cheap and easy introduction to the strategy genre as a whole, you can't go far wrong.

Will Porter

PCZONE VERDICT

78



When Elvis was just a glint in the milkman's eye...



It may be eight years old, but the gameplay is tireless.

## RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC

■ £9.99 | Pub: Focus Multimedia | ETA: Out Now

**RAYMAN IS** something of an oddity. Not just because he has no limbs and wears a stupid red bandanna, but for the very fact that such an unappealing, kiddie-safe and, well, effeminate character has gained such a large following, especially in a context of Marios, Metroids and Billy Hatchers.

Of course, on the PC, he's always been the best the platform/adventure genre could offer, so his presence was grudgingly welcomed. But times change. In the past six months, we've had the ace

new *Prince Of Persia* game, not to mention *Rayman's* eclectic new stablemate, *Beyond Good & Evil*.

So do we still need the little freak, even if he's only a tenner? I'd be tempted to say no, but that's not to say that this isn't a very good game. In fact, it's probably *Rayman's* best outing, with rock-solid platforming elements and a few novel touches. It's mostly the same shit with different gloves, but it does have a measure of charm and ingenuity that belies its derivative roots.

Anthony Holden

PCZONE VERDICT

69



Perhaps *Rayman's* finest hour.

## ENTER THE MATRIX



"Missed me!"

"Dude, what's up with your leg?"

■ £19.99 | Pub: Atari | ETA: Out Now

**ON ITS ORIGINAL** release, *Enter The Matrix* may have been dismissed as scarcely more than interactive merchandise, but 5,000,000 copies down the line, Atari is no doubt chuffed with the licence. And it's not the worst game in the world. A straightforward third-person all-action affair, it reclaims the bullet-time feature to mildly impressive effect, although the driving sections are largely risible.

The PC version suffers in comparison to its console brethren in so much as you are forced to use a keyboard and mouse combo, with no recourse to the far more appropriate analogue controller. As such,

you're always hurtling about at full speed, although thankfully the nature of the game does usually accommodate this. Playing as either Niobe or Ghost, there's under ten hours of gameplay with each – and the experience is only extended by the lack of manual save-games.

*Matrix* gimps will lap up the bonus footage, and although it's not the subtlety of games, it does provide a vaguely cinematic experience. Plus, this bargain version comes with the addition of two all-new mini-games. You lucky, lucky people.

Steve Hill

PCZONE VERDICT

58





The horrors of hell are captured wonderfully.

## HELLBOY: ASYLUM SEEKER

■ £4.99 | Pub: Dreamcatcher | ETA: Out Now

**FIVE POUNDS** could buy you around four packs of Micro Chicken Wings, half of a decent cheapo release like *kill.switch* or a substantial share in Leeds Utd. It could also get you *Hellboy: Asylum Seeker*, a pitiful comic book spin-off originally made for the PSone four years ago. Although if your fiver did get you this, it'd come bundled with anger. Pure, vitriolic anger.

In a just world, nobody would be allowed to make any money from re-releasing a lump of shite like this – especially when it's simply to cash in on the release of the new *Hellboy* film.

Everything is wrong – there's no limit to this game's blinding incompetence. Fighting consists of rhythmic tapping, maps are confusing and dull, voice-acting is dire and puzzles are so badly designed that you'll spend half an hour placing blocks on tables just to raise a badly-animated bridge that you won't want to walk over anyway.

This is an insult of a game. Buying it would be akin to paying someone five pounds to punch you in the face.

Will Porter

PCZONE VERDICT

5

## BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS

■ £9.99 | Pub: Xplosiv | ETA: Out Now



Two dudes with big choppers...

**SIX MONTHS AGO**, this was a fairly playable truck-driving game attempting to sell itself on some hoary old redneck gags and a slightly risqué marketing campaign. Now, stripped of its

novelty and overstated claims of notoriety, it just looks a bit shabby.

That said, there's still plenty of dumb fun to be had here, especially if you like the idea of crushing motorcycles beneath your enormous, menacing bulk. And while most of the game consists of driving big rigs, there's a fairly robust business management aspect as well, involving buying and selling cargo, dealing with loan sharks and engaging in a bit of gambling. It's all very light-hearted and occasionally raises a smirk, but there's little here of any lasting interest.

Then again, if you've ever yearned to be a redneck trucker with a knack for the open market, it is only ten notes.

Anthony Holden

PCZONE VERDICT

50



No sign of Burt Reynolds...

## TOTAL IMMERSION RACING

■ £9.99 | Pub: Xplosiv | ETA: Out Now



**THE CHEAPER** this gets, the more we like it. *TIR* was initially dismissed due to the marketing department's insistence on pushing the alleged Emotion AI – whereby wronged opponents would supposedly bear a grudge. However, ignore that barely apparent gimmick and it's a reasonably solid racing game. Robust, indestructible cars are the order of the day here, tearing round a series of official tracks recreated using the usual satellite technology, digital photography and coloured crayons.

Initially tricky to get to grips with, the handling seems a tad unnatural – but essentially the game rewards hard, no-nonsense driving as opposed to the handbrake turns and screeching wheels of more frivolous counterparts. In fact, *TIR* could almost be accused of being a bit dull, a theory backed up by the earthy



A blue car. At Silverstone.

menus and miserable photographs of potential employers.

A lengthy career mode is in place, with a variety of cars and tracks as you progress and offers of work flooding in for successful drivers. It's not exactly *TOCA Race Driver 2* (see page 68), but it is considerably cheaper. If you want a no-frills racer, you could do a lot worse.

Steve Hill

PCZONE VERDICT

60

## LEFTOVERS

▲ Not satisfied with that lot? Keep rummaging then, bargain hunters, as there's something here for everyone – but especially for those who like shabby old games that are way past their sell-by dates.

First on the pile is *Total Annihilation: Kingdoms* (Sold Out, £4.99, Out Now).

This weary old warhorse has already been available on budget for some three years now, and halving its price hasn't made it any more attractive. Great at the time, it's now a dated, formulaic RTS that only commands 59 per cent.

*FourFourTwo* (Sold Out, £4.99, Out Now) is a footy management game that's not made by Sports Interactive, so history tells us it should be shite. Sure enough, it is: the shabby 3D match engine, weak magazine licence and inclusion of Gabby Logan all fail to lift *FourFourTwo* above the commonplace. 40 per cent.

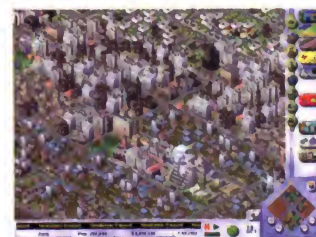
More promising is the super-budget *SimCity 3000 UK Edition* (Sold Out, £4.99, Out Now). It's getting a bit long in the tooth, but you'd still be hard-pressed to distinguish this city-builder from the more recent *SimCity 4*. The *UK Edition* includes special buildings like the Houses of Parliament and the BT Tower, and we give it a solid 70 per cent.

Another welcome return is 2000's well-remembered *Supreme Snowboarding* (Sold Out, £4.99, Out Now). Not only did it allow us to make jokes about 'pulling a stiffy', but it was actually one of the better extreme sports games of the time, and still grabs a phat 61 per cent.

If your pleasures are of the more sedate kind, *Chessmaster 8000* (Focus Multimedia, £9.99, Out Now) might be a more suitable gambit. The price is still a bit steep, but this is a high quality chess game and deserves the full 67 per cent that we're giving it.

And finally, just to bring you back down to Earth, there's *Europe Racer* (Xplosiv, £4.99, Out Now), a turd from the Davilex stable that should be avoided at all costs – 10 per cent. Don't say we didn't warn you.

Anthony Holden



SimCity 3000 UK Edition.



Supreme Snowboarding.



Total Annihilation: Kingdoms.



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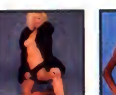
## SEXY!



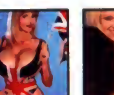
JORDAN  
CODE: 59100



NICE BUM!  
CODE: 59083



JO GUEST  
CODE: 59051



PATRIOTIC  
CODE: 59021



JO GUEST  
CODE: 59025



PIERCED  
CODE: 59068



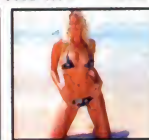
MELINDA MESSENGER  
CODE: 59022



SUSPENSERS  
CODE: 59101



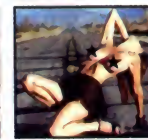
SAM FOX  
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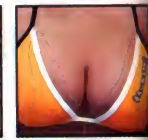
BEACH BABE  
CODE: 59105



DELICIOUS!  
CODE: 59005



GIRL ON RACE TRACK  
CODE: 59080



CLEAVAGE  
CODE: 59050



I WANT YOU  
CODE: 59092



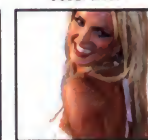
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CODE: 59093



SAUCY  
CODE: 59097



CATHY LLOYD  
CODE: 59107



BRITNEY  
CODE: 59098



SUSPENSERS  
CODE: 59106

## COOL!



BEAR NECESSITIES  
CODE: 59075



POIN STAR  
CODE: 59037



SPERM DONOR  
CODE: 59071



CHILL OUT  
CODE: 59029



SUPER MAN  
CODE: 59072



HONEY DEVIL  
CODE: 59052



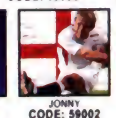
STARSKY & HUTCH  
CODE: 59078



KISS MY  
CODE: 59099



CHILSEA  
CODE: 59131



2 FAST 2 FURIOUS  
CODE: 59065



BAT PHONE  
CODE: 59082



naughty girl!  
CODE: 59048



naughty girl!  
CODE: 59048



naughty girl!  
CODE: 59048



LAMBORGHINI  
CODE: 59082



BUSH CUTTER!  
CODE: 59074



CHILLIN' KERMIT  
CODE: 59038



CRASH  
CODE: 59023



EMINEM  
CODE: 59041



LEAP OF FAITH  
CODE: 59084



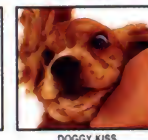
DIABLO  
CODE: 59127



IT'S A CRACKER!  
CODE: 59126



JODIE MARSH  
CODE: 59124



DOGGY KISS  
CODE: 59133



MAGIC DOOR  
CODE: 59132



MAGIC NUMBER  
CODE: 59060

TEXT **PICS4** FOLLOWED BY A SPACE  
THEN THE 5 DIGIT **CODE** SEND TO **80010**  
EG: SEND PICS4 59038 TO 80010

Have Me  
Now!  
CODE: 59091

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### TOP POP

Danni Minogue - I Begin To Wonder	51001
Junior Senior - Move Your Feet	51002
Scooter - Weekend	51003
Sean Paul - Get Busy	51004
Tim Deluxe - It Just Won't Do	51005
Tomcraft - Loneliness	51006
Daft Punk - Around the World	51008
Alien Ant Farm - Smooth Criminal	51009
ATB - 9pm Till I Come	51010
Eminem - The Real Slim Shady	51012
Wardue Project - King of my Castle	51015
666Devil	51016
Alice Deejay - Better Off Alone	51018
All Saints - Pure Shores	51020
Blink 182 - All the Small Things	51021
Blur - Song 2	51022
Eiffel 65 - Blue	51023
Eminem - My Name Is	51024
Mary J Blige - Family Affair	51025
Eminem - Forget About Dre	51026
Coolio - Gangsta's Paradise	51027
Outkast - Ms Jackson	51028
Nelly - Hot in Here	51029
Puff Daddy - Missing You	51030
Eminem - Without Me	51031
Cher - I Believe	51032
Mauro Picotto - Like This Like That	51033

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Mission Impossible	51019
Airwolf	52001
Fawlt Towers	52002
Ghostbusters	52003
Knight Rider	52005
Lone Ranger	52006
Muppet Show	52007
Addams Family	52008
Scooby-Doo	52009
Austin Powers	52011
Beetlejuice	52014
YMCA	52016
Jungle Book - Bare Necessities	52018
A Team	52020
Beverly Hills Cop	52023
Benny Hill	52024
Black Adder	52025
Buffy the Vampire Slayer	52027
Eye of the Tiger	52028
Grandstand	52029
Always Look on the Bright Side of Life	52031
Danger Mouse	52033
Ghostbusters	52034
Magnum	52035
Beverly Hillsbillies	52036
Cheers	52038
Rocky Horror - Timewarp	52040

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The X Files	52043
Coronation Street	52045
The Professionals	52046
The Sweeney	52047
Cagney & Lacy	52048

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Queen - We Will Rock You	52012
Madness - Baggys Trousers	52013
Fat Boys / The Beach Boys - Wipeout	52015
Pink Floyd - Another Brick in the Wall	52017
Billy Idol - White Wedding	52022
Shaggy - Mr Boombastic	52026
Aha - Take on Me	52030
The Beatles - Love Me Do	52032
Queen - Another One Bites the Dust	52039
Soft Cell - Tainted Love	52042

TEXT **TUNE**  
FOLLOWED BY A SPACE  
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# FEEDBACK

Forget asylum seekers, Iraq and the NHS – the real debate gripping the nation is over *Deus Ex: Invisible War*. Will Porter unleashes the vitriol

**DEUS EX:  
INVISIBLE  
WAR  
SPECIAL**

## IT'S YOUR SHOUT

Feedback is here to offer you a platform to have your say about games we've reviewed in recent issues. Whether you totally agree or utterly disagree with us, we want to hear from you. And all you have to do to get your views in print is send an email to [letters@pczone.co.uk](mailto:letters@pczone.co.uk) with 'Feedback' in the subject line. Please try and keep your views to less than 100 words. Anything longer will not be considered or may have to be edited for size.

## DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

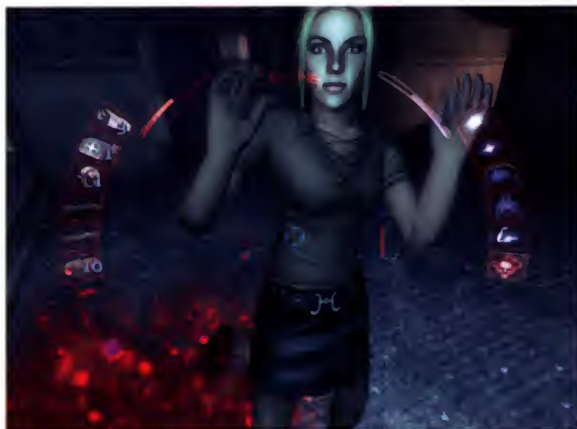
REVIEWED ISSUE 137 (BY RICHIE SHOEMAKER)  
SCORE: 86%

### What we thought:

"*Deus Ex* doesn't cut the mustard. The fact remains that *Invisible War* neither runs at the full-pelt pace to satiate the FPS drone, nor offers the depth of character development to satisfy the seasoned role-player – or indeed the veteran *Deus Ex* fan. Saying that, although there are more visceral action games around, few are as intelligent, demanding or rewarding as this."

### What you said:

I've tried so hard to be pleased with it – but



You can always spot a ladyboy by the big goalie hands.

what an utter letdown. Aside from the vaguely improved graphics, is there anything that hasn't been dumbed down from the original? This is purely about delivering a brain-numbing console game isn't it?

The completion of many tasks is next to pointless, as there aren't many consequences to your actions, let alone rewards. The loss of skills and skill-points takes so much away from the game's enjoyment too – in the original, the skills you chose to develop dramatically altered your gaming experience.

It's not just that the gameplay hasn't moved on since the original that makes me angry, though: it's the fact that it's taken such a step backward in so many areas. Having waited excitedly for this game for years, my disappointment is huge.

Ashley Holloway

The dialogue in *Invisible War* is often appallingly ham-fisted and the character you play seems to have no sense of guile when dealing with other characters. This leaves you feeling cold towards the majority of the characters and not really caring who you please or upset.

The levels are a big letdown too. Don't get

me wrong, some are fantastic and worthy of the original: it's just that there are no open levels to roam around as there were in *Deus Ex*. This reduces every level to a corridor crawl and almost forces you into confrontations with enemies, as well as taking out half the fun of having a sniper rifle.

Taken in isolation, *Invisible War* is a good action-adventure game. Taken as the successor to *Deus Ex*, it's a disappointment.

Bagsabbis

I hate how the NPCs are so stupid (often walking into walls or just ignoring you), while the biomods make the game far too easy: these failings make the sneak or strike aspect completely obsolete. Also, the storyline is weak and the game is far too short.

In the end, it doesn't even matter what side you've chosen to help the most in this game: you make one final decision about who you believe, get a two-minute end sequence and that's it. Poor. The game promised so much, but delivered so little.

JoeyBananas

*Invisible War* is incredible in its detail: plenty of loving care has been lavished on it, but unfortunately to no avail. The limitations of designing with an

Xbox release in mind culminates in a number of limitations. No leaning (not enough buttons); cramped, short levels with large loading times to accommodate the limited memory size; and no numbers, which means no stats, no ammo count and no experience points.

I agree that the simplification of certain areas was necessary and that a role-playing game doesn't have to feature experience points and levelling up: *Legend Of Zelda* and *System Shock* are still RPGs, aren't they? However, the point of role-playing is to let you play and define a role. If *Ion Storm* had concentrated on the PC version first, I imagine this game would have been a whole lot better.

Chris 'The Tangler' Capel

I've just finished *Invisible War* and I quite like it. OK, it's missing most of its RPG elements (making it more a complex shooter), but it's still quite good.

Yes, I miss the inventory (it's silly that a multitool takes up as much room as a rocket launcher). Yes, I miss the skill system (which would have made it perfect). And yes, the unified ammo is dumbing down a touch too far.

However, the choices are still there: its story is non-linear and you can side with whatever faction you like, or not side with

anyone at all. Plus, the stealth/combat approach is intact and non-lethal takedowns are still there. What's more, it looks cracking on a top-spec PC.

Driver

### Richie's comment:

I honestly think that your enjoyment of *Deus Ex: Invisible War* hinges on how forgiving you're willing to be. There are obvious flaws, clear evidence of key gameplay elements being watered down and a general shift away from being one of the most PC-centric titles around towards mass-market appeal.

So, you can get in a tiz about it, as many people rightfully have, or you can bite your tongue and appreciate the great things that have been left behind; namely the story, the non-linear objectives and the great visuals.

Witnessing the dilution of such a classic game is a bitter pill to swallow, but I think that enough of the original JC Denton remains in *Invisible War* to make it a good game overall. [X]



Even the robots are turning their noses up at this sequel.

**"Having waited excitedly for years, my disappointment is huge"**

ASHLEY HOLLOWAY IS NO FAN OF *INVISIBLE WAR*









# SUPERTEST: RPGS

## THE CONTENDERS



**DUNGEON SIEGE**  
ISSUE 114, SCORE 89%



**DEUS EX**  
ISSUE 93, SCORE 94%



**DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR**  
ISSUE 137, SCORE 86%



**NEVERWINTER NIGHTS**  
ISSUE 118, SCORE 91%



**STAR WARS: KNIGHTS  
OF THE OLD REPUBLIC**  
ISSUE 137, SCORE 94%



**THE ELDER SCROLLS III:  
MORROWIND**  
ISSUE 117, SCORE 94%

## THE JURY



**DAVE**  
'SHAZAM'  
WOODS



**MARTIN**  
'THE BEAST'  
KORDA



**WILL**  
'LEGOLAS'  
PORTER



**RHIANNA**  
'VALKYRIE'  
PRATCHETT



**CHRIS**  
'GOT A LIGHT?'  
ANDERSON

**Martin Korda and his party of hearty games reviewers embark on a quest to find the greatest RPG in the land**

**THE ROLE-PLAYING GENRE** is one of the oldest and most popular in gaming history. A quick glance at the RPG section in our A-List reveals just how many top-quality titles are out there for the PC, despite the fact that the genre is increasingly being drowned out by MMORPGs and more mainstream console RPGs. As such, it was bloody hard work whittling the list down to a mere six games.

Nonetheless, we think our final list represents an excellent cross-section of titles, ranging from the bearded goblin-bothering of *Neverwinter Nights* to the sci-fi neuromancing of *Deus Ex*. Even so, the debate over which games warranted a mention was so fierce that we've also added an Honorary Mention category at the end of the Supertest, where our panel members get to name any favourites that didn't make the cut. Hopefully that will shut them up for a bit. Anyway, on to the discussion, which, as always, produced some rather unexpected results...



## KOTOR

**Dave:** The appeal of RPGs is getting a lot broader now with RPG elements getting into more and more types of games.

**Chris:** They also seem to be getting dumbed down a lot and are more action/adventures than RPGs. Just look at *Deus Ex 2*.

**Martin:** I didn't get that sense from this game, though. If anything, it's one of the most epic RPGs here.

**Dave:** It is in terms of story. But it does feel a bit simplified compared to what BioWare has done before.



KOTOR's pseudo-turn-based combat isn't to everyone's liking.

everything freezes. I know RPGs have never had the best combat mechanics, but hey, at least try to make them exciting.

**Dave:** Doing it like this makes it more tactical, though.

**Rhianna:** I found it really clunky. I think it would've worked better in real-time with an option to pause, so you could turn-base it at your leisure.

**Chris:** The combat was almost laughably simplistic. It's so easy; just use a few med packs or set a Jedi up to heal and you can stroll through it.

**Martin:** Out of all of these games, the storyline is by far the best. It's gripping, well written and acted, and in many ways better than the last couple of *Star Wars* films. Dave, you've never been much of *Star Wars* fan, what did you think?

**Dave:** *Star Wars*? Dawson's Creek with robots! (Everyone laughs apart from Dave, who looks deadly serious.)

**Dave:** I've often been put off by

*Star Wars* because everyone's so into it. However, if I didn't have this stigma with *Star Wars*, then I think this would have been the best storyline for me.

**Will:** It's great because it's not really linked to the storyline of the films – it feels like a whole new universe.

**Martin:** The start was just so comical though. There you are on this ship which is breaking up and under attack, and some bloke's there telling you his life

story. He's like: "Yeah, we're under attack but let me tell you about my childhood..." (Everyone laughs.)

**Martin:** And the way they integrated the tutorial at the start was a bit comical too.

**Dave:** Yeah, there are certainly better ways of doing it.

## DEUS EX AND DX2

**Will:** *Deus Ex* was one of the best gaming experiences of my life. I was incredibly excited about the second one, so I wasn't very happy when it turned up and was just OK.

**Dave:** Not only did *Invisible War* feel dumbed-down, but it often felt dumb too. Why's there no targeting for example? There's no excuse for it!

**Will:** And why do you use the same kind of ammo for every single gun? Why?!

(Will starts to shake in his chair...) **Will:** Why?! Why?! WHY?! (...and pound his fists on the desk, nearly weeping.)

**Martin:** He's off again everyone. Someone get the rope.

**Will:** WHY?!

**Martin:** Is *Invisible War* actually an RPG, though? Sure, you can upgrade yourself in a variety of ways, but you could do that in *Tron 2.0*. Does that make *Tron 2.0* an RPG?

**"Why do you use the same kind of ammo for every single gun? Why?! Why?! WHY?!"**

WILL PORTER IS EXASPERATED BY *DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR*



KOTOR offers a phenomenal wealth of gameplay.

**Martin:** But surely that isn't a bad thing? For so long, the genre seemed inaccessible to newcomers. Maybe games like *KOTOR* will give the genre a new lease of life.

**Rhianna:** Yeah, but there's a difference between being dumbed-down and just plain dumb, though.

**Chris:** *KOTOR* is definitely dumbed-down to hell in comparison to games like *Planescape Torment*.

**Will:** I think *KOTOR*'s just really streamlined – you don't see all of the scary dice-rolling going on, as it's all hidden in the background so well.

**Rhianna:** Does dice-rolling scare you Will?

**Will:** Yes. Very much. (Guffaws all round.)

**Rhianna:** I liked *KOTOR*, but I didn't expect it to be quite as watered down as it was. I thought it would be a bit more like *Neverwinter Nights*. However, the nature of its environments – the way the cities feel busy and ships land and take off – is much better than *NWN*. It feels like more of a living world. It also has a lot

more useful interaction with NPCs. It doesn't have nearly as many sub-quests as *Neverwinter Nights*, though.

**Chris:** I think it works better as an adventure game than an RPG. A lot of the weapons are really similar to each other, to the point you don't even bother checking their stats. It's still an excellent game, though. It has a great storyline, nice graphics and loads of NPCs to talk to. There's a lot to like about it – it's just not as much of an RPG as we might have expected from BioWare.

**Martin:** What about the combat?

**Dave:** Passable.

**Martin:** It's one of the worst parts of the game as far as I'm concerned. I thought the game had crashed first time around when the action suddenly stopped after one attack.

**Will:** How else could they have done it? I love this style of combat – you can really think about each move.

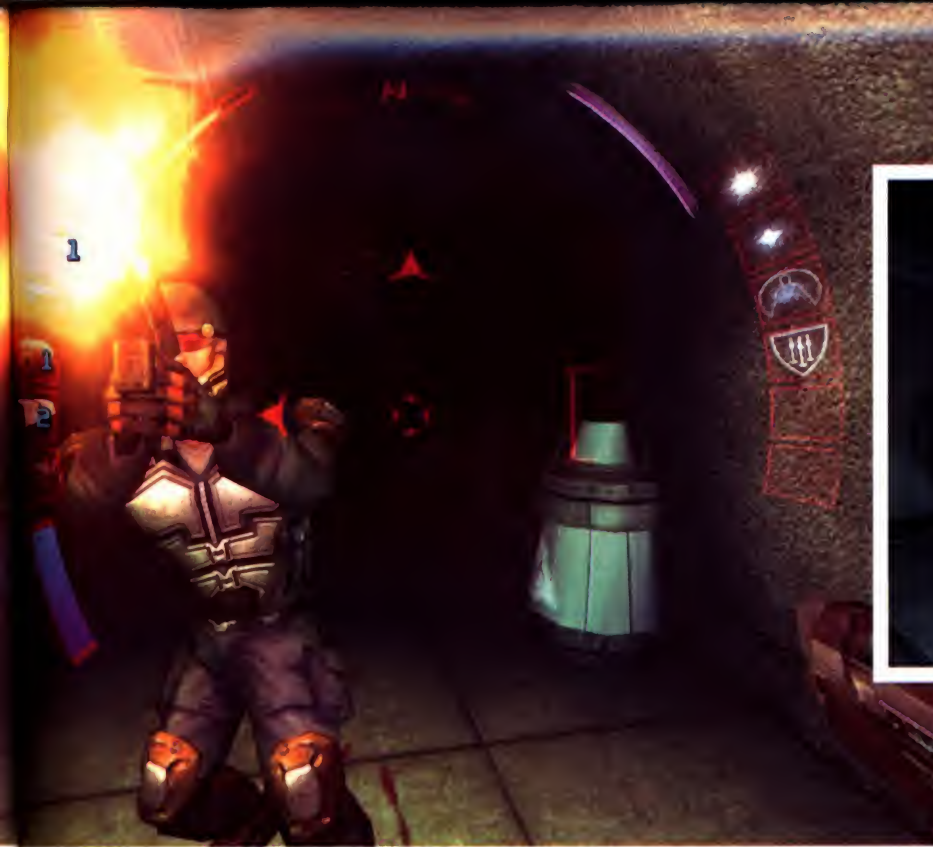
**Martin:** Yeah, but there's no immediacy to it: it looks ludicrous. One minute you're charging in and hacking people left and right, the next



DX is strong on atmosphere, storyline and gameplay.







**Invisible War: invisible RPG elements?**

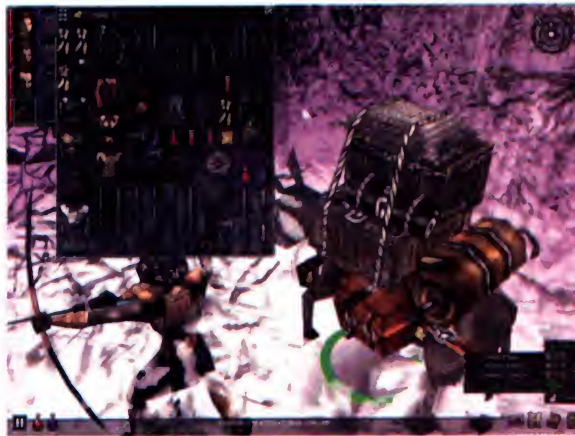
**Dave:** *Deus Ex* was far more of an RPG than *Invisible War* was. Plus, we were told before it came out that DX2 would have the best physics and AI we'd ever seen, but clearly it doesn't. **Martin:** *Deus Ex* is such a superb game, even though it's the oldest one here. It's just so freeform and it's so easy to upgrade or change your abilities - you can pick and choose how to approach pretty much every single obstacle. So, you can be stealthy and cunning or you can just wade in and blow the shit out of everyone. You don't feel

your character is limited like it is in, say, *Neverwinter Nights*. **Rhianna:** And on the other hand *Invisible War* seemed to make all of these choices for you. **Chris:** I thought these games were just plain dull, it's as simple as that. Dull environments, dull gameplay and dull everything else. The story's pretty good but the voice-acting is so bad, I often just wanted to get conversations over with. **Martin:** *Invisible War*, sure. But *Deus Ex*? No way. **Dave:** *Deus Ex* was brilliant but flawed and gave you a glimpse of what a truly great RPG could be like. I thought *Invisible War* would take all of those elements and improve on them, adding real-world physics and great graphics for an unbelievably immersive experience. Clearly it didn't, but I still think it's a good game, if not a great RPG. **Martin:** As a shooter, *Invisible War* is certainly a well-crafted game that holds up on the PC pretty well. But I don't accept the argument that the reason it wasn't as good as everyone hoped it would be was because it shipped on the Xbox first. You just have to look at *KOTOR* to see that argument is rubbish.

### DUNGEON SIEGE

**Rhianna:** I've completed this! (Ripple of sarcastic applause.) **Rhianna:** I loved it as a hack 'n' slash, but it had no plot at all. **Dave:** The developer put this forward as one of the game's plus points, telling us it was all about action. **Rhianna:** Even *Diablo II* had more of a plot than this! **Dave:** They had definite ideas

with *Dungeon Siege* and some of them worked. There's loads wrong with it, but it's fun too. **Martin:** It's got two things as far as I'm concerned. One: good combat. Two: excellent interface. **Dave:** Yeah, the combat is good. And the interface was another major selling point, with that donkey carrying all your stuff. **Martin:** That f\*\*\*ing donkey!



**Dungeon Siege: combat, combat and more combat. And some donkeys.**



**Not the best time to turn the other cheek, really.**

What a crap selling point. What's so great about your game then? Well, we've got a donkey in it. No plot though... (Sniggers all round.)

**Will:** I didn't feel I wanted to play this to the end, but I agree that the interface is brilliant. But I like my RPGs to make me think and this one didn't.

## "What's so great about your game? Well, we've got a donkey in it. No plot though..."

**MARTIN KORDA THINKS DUNGEON SIEGE IS A BIT OF AN ASS**

**Rhianna:** The engine's great, but it doesn't have anything like item-crafting in it. It's a beautiful game, but I just wish it had more substance.

**Chris:** I completed this and enjoyed it. The graphics are nice, the interface is legendary and combat works well too. It's no classic, but it's fun while it lasts. **Rhianna:** It's got the makings of a great RPG if only... **Dave:** You had the ability to weave tapestries? **Rhianna:** I've never weaved a tapestry in an RPG! **Martin:** Maybe the option of combining a spoon with a sword then? A spword!

**Dungeon Siege has a great interface, but where's the storyline?**





**Morrowind proves to be head and shoulders above the competition.**

**Dave:** Yeah, a weapon you can eat soup with and defend yourself at the same time. *(Everyone laughs.)*  
**Rhianna:** No, no, I just mean it'd be better if you could craft new items from old ones and if it had a better storyline, that's all.  
**Will:** I liked the character creation system. I love the way it happens naturally, so that the more you fire arrows, the better you get at firing them.  
**Rhianna:** The party system worked well and the AI of your party members is really good, which is exactly what you need with this type of game.  
**Dave:** Ultimately though, it's just really simplistic. If it was a TV programme, it'd be a soap opera rather than *Panorama*.

## MORROWIND

**Dave:** I played this for 30 hours when it first came out and I loved it. I was a bit scared of it because it looked really hardcore,

but it ended up being brilliant. This is one of the few games I've played where I felt I was actually in a living, breathing world. I often felt really bad about some of the things I did though, like stealing stuff.  
**Rhianna:** I love it too. I think it's the nearest any single-player RPG has come to capturing the feel of an online RPG.  
**Chris:** This is still the best RPG

**Will:** I'm really getting into it now. It's so immersive that you think you're in another world and you can pretty much do anything you want.  
**Martin:** I thought it was a bit like *GTA3* with wizards.  
**Dave:** It really works as a non-linear game.  
**Will:** Yeah, because all the while you're doing one thing, you feel that there are other things you

**"This is one of the few games I've played where I felt I was in a living, breathing world"**

**DAVE WOODS IS ONE OF MANY FANS OF MORROWIND**

out there by a long way. It always amazes me how the game world is actually quite small, but there's so much to do in it you get the impression you're in a much bigger world. And with so many excellent mods for it, it's a game you can forget about for a while if you want, then go back to see what the community has added.

could be out there doing instead.  
**Rhianna:** I found the combat a bit clunky.  
**Martin:** Really? I quite liked it. I actually felt like I had some control over it, unlike in many of these other games.  
**Chris:** I thought the combat was OK: nothing special, but there was nothing particularly annoying about it.  
**Dave:** It was clunky, but at least it worked.  
**Will:** It was really strange at first. Being an FPS monkey, I couldn't get my head round why I wasn't hitting enemies all the time – even though I was swinging for them. But you soon get used to it.  
**Rhianna:** The character creation is great. It asks you questions like: 'You see a bakery burning down, do you a) steal all the bread, b) help put out the fire.' Your answers then construct who you are.  
**Martin:** My favourite part was the guild system. You



**Morrowind's combat is a bit hit-and-miss. Literally.**

can join one and secretly go off and complete missions for it without anyone knowing you're a member.

**Dave:** You really did feel like each guild had people in it who had meetings and plotted against you.

**Martin:** Any game that can capture you like that and make you feel guilty is a classic game in my book.

**Chris:** I agree. It's easily the best example of how to make a believable world on PC to date.

**Will:** I also found it tempting to play as a bastard.

**Rhianna:** Y'see, when it came down to it, I couldn't. I ended up just doing good deeds.

**Dave:** Can I tell you about my mushroom story?

**Martin:** This isn't like that 'fork' story you had from *Planescape Torment* is it?

**Dave:** It's my new 'fork' story. This wizard made me go and pick some flowers by a lake... *(The gentle sound of snoring starts to fill the room.)*

**Dave:** It took me two hours (real time) to get there – I got lost on the way. When I came back, he told me to go back and get some mushrooms. That was the point I switched the PC off and opened the curtains. The conclusion I gained from all this was that

while it's a brilliant game, *Morrowind* is one for people with no jobs. It's too time-consuming.  
**Martin:** What about if you had all the time in the world?  
**Dave:** In that case, I probably would have completed *Morrowind* at least twice.

## NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

**Rhianna:** I think that the last two expansion packs have added a lot to *Neverwinter Nights*, but the original was great on its own too, thanks to its superb Dungeon Master capabilities and I think BioWare is such a dedicated development studio and it's always producing extra things for *Morrowind*, which is great...



*(Worried looks are exchanged as Rhianna fails to take a breath.)*  
**Rhianna:** And I've always been impressed with what BioWare's added in the expansion packs – especially in the last one and...



**Neverwinter Nights may not be the prettiest game, but it has some excellent multiplayer options.**



## AND THE WINNER IS... THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

### IT'S A WHITEWASH FOR BETHESDA'S EPIC...

Few Supertests have ever proved quite so one-sided, surprising considering the average review score here is a whopping 91 per cent. What made it even more surprising was that none of us expected the result to be quite so clear-cut.

For Will, it was *Morrowind*'s massive freeform world that narrowly swung it for him over *KOTOR*. "It's such an impressive creation. I can't quite get my head around how the developer made such a complex game."

Rhianna had similar reasons. "It creates a brilliant world, and even if you play it for hours and hours, you'll never find everything in it. It's incredibly freeform, which means you can just roam around forever."

Dave's reasons, however, were slightly more morally influenced: "*Morrowind* is the closest that any game has ever come to creating a world where you really want to go and role-play. You

always feel that you have some influence over the world and responsibility for your actions. If you do something evil, you actually feel guilty."

Martin was torn between the old and the new. "*Morrowind* just about wins it for me. It has the most freeform and believable world, but the combat lets it down – something that *Deus Ex* does much better."

So finally, we came to RPG veteran Chris Anderson who's been playing RPGs since birth (406BC) and who's actually married to a half-orc potter/rogue (in *Norrath*). Summing up the group's feelings perfectly he said: "*Morrowind* is still the game by which all new RPGs will be judged – it literally has everything. The other games here all have one or two elements of a great RPG, but *Morrowind* has it all. No other RPG comes close in terms of depth, complexity and pure atmosphere."



*Morrowind* wins by a mile.

## OUR VERDICT

### THE SCORES ON THE DOORS

JURY	WINNER (2PTS)	RUNNER UP (1PT)	HONORARY MENTION
DAVE	MORROWIND	KOTOR	PLANESCAPE TORMENT
MARTIN	MORROWIND	DEUS EX	SYSTEM SHOCK 2
WILL	MORROWIND	KOTOR	FALLOUT 2
RHIANNA	MORROWIND	NEVERWINTER NIGHTS	BALDUR'S GATE II
CHRIS	MORROWIND	KOTOR	PLANESCAPE TORMENT

POSITION	GAME	POINTS
1ST	THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND	10
2ND	KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC	3
3RD	DEUS EX	1
3RD	NEVERWINTER NIGHTS	1
5TH	DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR	0
6TH	DUNGEON SIEGE	0

Company is rare in *Neverwinter Nights*.

## OVER TO YOU

### THE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN AND THE VOTES ARE IN

Just like our result, there was no contest when it came down to choosing your winner, with *Morrowind* running away with it after raking in a massive 41 per cent of your votes.

"It was the game that got me into RPGs," stated an exultant **DarthMorbus**, who was backed up by an equally excited **Ardwen**, who chimed: "*Morrowind* is perfect in every department." **Feelic** couldn't agree more. "It's got to be *Morrowind* for me. The sheer scope of

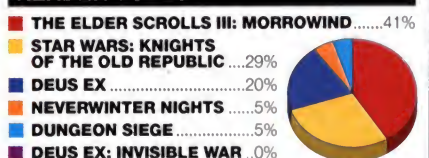
the game, the size of the outdoor expanses and variety of quests make it unparalleled."

However, *KOTOR* also made a good fist of it, accumulating 29 per cent of your love. "I'm not a big *Star Wars* fan, but this game really sucked me in. The characters are deep and interact well with each other and the story has feeling and immersion," said **gilly71**. Meanwhile, **Randy\_beagle** claimed that: "*KOTOR* is damn good fun. And it's *Star Wars*! Proper *Star Wars*! What, you mean unlike the last two films?"

Finally, *Deus Ex* racked up a respectable 20 per cent of the votes to come in third. "*Deus Ex* is one of my top ten favourite games," states a defiant **deadmartyr**, turning his nose up at the newer games in the list. Says **Gowerly**: "It's one of the most addictive RPG-type games ever."

If you'd like to have your say and take part in the next Supertest, log on to the **PC ZONE** forum at [www.pczone.co.uk](http://www.pczone.co.uk) to register your vote.

### READER VOTES



*Morrowind*'s the RPG that floats your boat.

**Martin:** Breathe.

(*Rhianna finally inhales.*)

**Rhianna:** The party interaction in the game is awesome.

**Martin:** We thought we were going to lose you there for a minute, Rhianna.

**Will:** My main problem with it is that you can only have one companion to help you. You feel like a bit of Billy-No-Mates.

**Dave:** If I was going to play a hardcore RPG, I'd much rather play *Morrowind*.

**Will:** I wouldn't say that this is a particularly hardcore RPG, though.

**Chris:** I have to admit I was totally underwhelmed by this game. The interface is clunky and the story is dull as hell. I thought I was going to fall asleep every time the main character started blabbing to some nondescript NPC about something I really didn't care about. It's a big disappointment after games like *Baldur's Gate II* and *Planescape Torment*.

**Martin:** This is definitely the

ugliest game here. I really don't think the playing perspective does it any favours. As a hardcore game it's got pretty much everything you'd expect. However, compare it to *Morrowind*, which is far more freeform and all about character development, and you can see it's a far inferior RPG.

**Will:** A lot of the levels do feel very artificially laid out. It doesn't feel like a living, breathing world.

**Dave:** I suppose that all comes back to first-person versus third-person perspectives, though. If you really want to immerse yourself in a role, then surely you've got to be playing from a first-person perspective.

**Chris:** Definitely. That's one of the reasons *Morrowind* is so immersive too.

**Will:** *Neverwinter Nights* is a brilliant game though, even though I've said negative things about it. It's the game I've dedicated more of my life to than any other here. There's always one more thing to do. [X]



# YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE WIRED WORLD OF ONLINE GAMING

# ONLINE ZONE

SEE THE  
WORLD



■ **ONLINE EDITOR:** Paul Presley

▲ Before we begin, a quick message for the Inner Circle: 28, 12, 51, Red, 22. You have your instructions, now go and seek the blessed havoc to come.

It's the big one! *EverQuest II* is so close you can taste it (which we did – see page 96 for our exclusive hands-on report). So does this mark the end for the original?

Every new virtual world that appears proclaims itself as 'the next generation of MMORPGs' (an acronym that still won't die, despite my best efforts), yet all of them offer the same basic concepts dressed up in different clothes. Worse, every MMOG that's looked as though it might be offering something different has either kicked the bucket, bitten the dust or run down the curtain and joined the choir invisible. *Mythica*, *URU Live*, even *The Matrix Online* has lost its publisher.

Truth is, very few games can qualify as 'next-generation'. A couple of tweaks here and there and a new graphics engine don't equate to a generational change. Sony knows this, and it knows that with half a million people paying money into the original *EverQuest* every month, there's no point in chopping the head off that particular cash cow any time soon. As the report on the fifth anniversary Fan Faire to the night shows – players are too heavily invested in Norrath Mk.1 to want to just abandon it now.

On an unrelated note, turn now – right now! – to our disc pages and get yourself into *EVE Online*, handily provided on the shiny joy bearers adorning our cover. Register an account and you'll automatically be entered into our blisteringly excellent *EVE* competition in which you could win yourself a trip to Iceland! Truly we are the magazine of champions.

## ELVING LAS

FIVE-YEAR *EVERQUEST* VETERANS CELEBRATE IN STYLE

"**ONLY IN NORRATH** could a short, bearded woman win a beauty contest." And only, apparently when a significant portion of Norrath's regular warriors and warriors have decamped to the Las Vegas Hilton for the fifth anniversary *EverQuest* Fan Faire.

Sony Online Entertainment has been running these fan conventions twice a year since the game first launched, but never quite on this scale. If any location on Earth is more suited to the sight of armoured warriors and demon women walking through hotel lobbies filled with gambling customers than Vegas, it'd be hard to name it. Although occasionally a suited type from a neighbouring conference on diabetes makes a wrong turn and looks on in a mixture of horror and bewilderment.

A series of Q&A panels with members of the *EQ Live* team (as the game is now commonly referred to) – discussions on lore, spellcraft, trading and technical queries – prove that for the dedicated fan, it's the very minutiae of the *EQ* world that makes the game so compelling. A 'live quest' event gives guild members a chance to prove their 'I33t skills' as they run around the event talking to costumed

NPCs and collecting cards. It's pretty much a live version of a typical *EQ* adventure, minus the scenery, combat and lag. Participants are banned from entering the casino areas in costume however. Under pain of death. The Las Vegas Hilton is accepting but not stupid.

Undoubtedly the highlights for most fans were the grand banquet and costume contest in which all 3,000 attendees



"It's 50 per cent cotton weave, 50 per cent orc hide. Vivienne Westwood's already been in touch as it happens."

gather to wish *EQ* a happy birthday, feast on an all-you-can-eat buffet and show off their hand-crafted armour and robes. The aforementioned dwarf woman walks (or, at least, struggles) off with the grand prize of a surround sound speaker kit, although it's the 'priest and newbie' double act that gets the most laughs of the night, with an accurate portrayal of a beginner's first steps in the game.



The fans watch as *EQII* is put through its paces.





94

**STAR WARS GALAXIES**  
Jedi in space – first pics



96

**EVERQUEST II**  
Hands-on with the big one



104

**BIOSFEAR**  
Korea's top MMOG rated



113

**NEVERQUEST**  
Steve Hill wants to sex you up

# VEGAS

The other highlight comes in the form of a party at the 'world-famous' Beach nightclub. Although more used to hosting weekly 'adult industry nights' and having a reputation for extreme hedonism, the venue copes admirably with the sudden influx of the less glamorous clientele, with a clearly mystified band regularly reading out messages of the 'Server X sucks, server Y rules!' variety. Tellingly, the bikini-clad serving girls inviting patrons to down shots from between their cleavages don't emerge

**Event co-ordinator Thomas Taylor keeps things going.**

until the majority of the Norrathians have long-since left.

Despite a fairly heavy *EverQuest II* presence, this is clearly Sony's way of showing its ongoing commitment to the older game. A panel on the upcoming new graphics engine draws the biggest crowd of the Faire, and the reassurance that the *EQ* Live team have extensive plans drawn out elicits much applauding and sighs of relief.

"A lot of people are under the assumption that when *EQII* launches, we're just going to flip the off switch for *EQ* and say, 'Okay, that's done now – go play this.' That's not what we're doing at all," says Eric Cosky, the lead programmer on the *EQ Live* team. "We've already got the next 18 months planned for *EQ*, through at least the



**She looks more moody than angry to us. Maybe it's the sunglasses.**

next two expansion packs. It's a long-term commitment. There are almost 500,000 people around the globe playing *EverQuest* right now. We don't want to make them angry!" The next pack, due out in summer, is set to concentrate purely on the graphical update and should certainly keep interest high in the existing world while *EQII* pulls in the alternative audience.

**"People are under the assumption that when *EQII* launches, we're going to flip the off switch for *EQ*. That's not what we're doing at all"**

**ERIC COSKY LEAD PROGRAMMER, EQ LIVE**



## WEBGAME OF THE MONTH

WHY PAY TO PLAY WHEN THE INTERWEB PROVIDES FUN FOR FREE?



### ORISINAL

(WWW.ORISINAL.COM)

It's all about presentation. My dearly beloved grandmother, on one of my many youthful summer holiday trips "oop north" once tried to instil goodness in my brother and I by serving a dinner comprised of spinach. Traditionally, when presented with food that wasn't fish fingers and chips, our disdainful sneers would be met with the no-nonsense "gerit down ya" to which we'd dutifully obey before sneaking to the sweet shop downstairs later.

This time, the spinach was served creamed. It sat there on the dining table like a giant bowl of irradiated nose effluence. There was silence in the room, broken eventually by my grandmother who just said, "God even I'm not eating that. Let's get down t'chippie." It's all about presentation.

Hence *Orisinal*. At face value, the diversions on the site are nothing more than basic parlour games and simple takes on arcade classics like *Missile Command*. But beauty is in the eye of the beholder. *Orisinal*'s submissions ooze class from every pixel. Elegance in design, elegance in control, elegance in presentation.

Never have cats walking across a screen been so captivating as when they're sashaying along to the gentle easy listening-style melody here. The ship that fires at falling rocks could be straight from an interactive version of the National Gallery, such is its craftsmanship.

Basic games, presented with style and flair. *Orisinal* is perfect for when you want to ease the stresses of a hectic day with something that challenges and soothes in equal measure. Something my Gran's spinach could have done with for sure.



***Orisinal*'s 'Cats' game. You'll be humming the tune for weeks.**



## CLAN DIARY



## INFINITY-ESPORTS

PHILIP WRIDE, Manager



The team enjoy Las Vegas.

Ever wondered what it takes to become a professional gamer? The time and dedication? How to combine it with an education or career?

Let me introduce myself. My name is Philip Wride (aka Protex). I'm 19 and run Infinity eSports, one of the largest and most successful multi-gaming teams in the UK. Currently, we compete in *Counter-Strike* and *Call Of Duty* tournaments at the highest level. Over the next few months, I'll be giving you an inside look at what goes on in the I-eS camp and give you a glimpse into the life of a professional gamer.

The team has 17 players in total: seven in the *Call Of Duty* squad, six in the *Counter-Strike* and four of us in general team management roles.

**"We've brought in outstanding Swedish talent and the new team has already seen great results"**

What's happened so far in 2004? First, our *Call Of Duty* team is a recent addition to I-eS, known formerly as UnderFire. UnderFire have already shown exceptional talent in the *COD* community, taking themselves to the top of the Clanbase UK Ladder and gaining impressive results against top European teams. We've also just recruited a new *Warcraft 3* team, rated tenth in the world already.

The *Counter-Strike* team have replaced a few members recently due to other commitments. Daniel Lucking (aka Luck1ng) has stepped back to concentrate on his professional golfing career and we wish him the best of luck in that. In his place, we've brought in some outstanding Swedish talent and the new team has already gained some impressive results. The C-S team will be taking part in UKT6 in Hull at the beginning of May, with many other events heading their way.

The C-S team also went to Las Vegas earlier this year to take part in the CyberXGaming Championships thanks to our sponsors, Sapphire Tech. Sadly, the event didn't take place due to poor organisation, but we still enjoyed ourselves. The whole community is upset by what happened there and many teams are trying to reclaim expenses from the event. Luckily, things like this don't happen very often. I'll bring you further updates on our progress next issue.

# STAR WARS IN SPACE

GALAXIES' 'SPACE' EXPANSION GETS SET FOR AUTUMN LAUNCH



In 'Space', you can fly X-Wings, TIE Fighters and brand new ships.

AS YOU'VE PROBABLY surmised from these brand new screens, *Star Wars: Galaxies* is about to get its biggest shake-up since the introduction of Jedi characters late last year. The long-awaited 'Space' expansion pack has been officially confirmed and initial art released.

The most exciting news is that ship-to-ship combat is to be in real-time. Fears of RPG-style turn-based battles, detrimental to the whole *Star Wars* experience appear to be unfounded as Rebel and Imperial factions take each other on in real-time combat. You'll be able to explore ten individual sectors in your shiny new ships, although it's more likely that these are ten sectors surrounding the existing worlds rather than brand new locales. Still no sign

of Dagobah or Cloud City, sadly.

Naturally, there'll be plenty of non-playable ships to encounter, from the venerable Star Destroyers to Rebel medical frigates. You'll also get over 100 new missions to delve into. No confirmation on the hinted-at new planets, new races and new player types as yet.

'Space' (still just a working title) is set to do the Kessel run this autumn. We'll keep you posted.

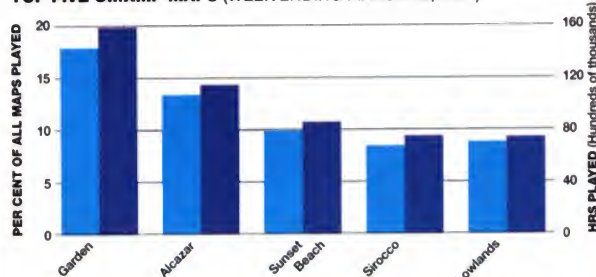
- Publisher: LucasArts
- Developer: Sony Online Entertainment
- ETA: Autumn 2004
- Website: [www.starwarsgalaxies.com](http://www.starwarsgalaxies.com)

## STATZONE

A LOOK AT THE DATA SHAPING YOUR ONLINE WORLD

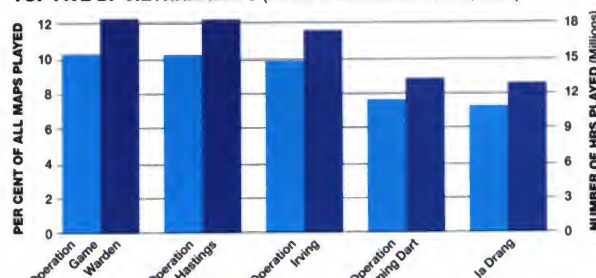
ALL DATA SUPPLIED BY  
ESPORTS.NET

### TOP FIVE U1: XMP MAPS (WEEK ENDING MARCH 28, 2004)



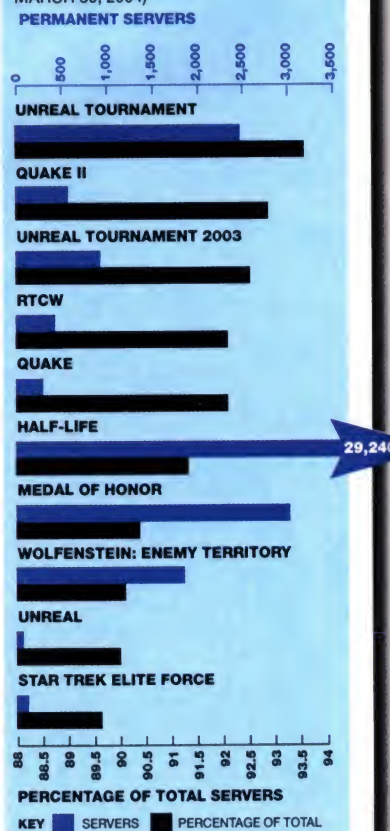
KEY ■ PERCENT OF ALL MAPS PLAYED ■ HOURS PLAYED (Hundreds of thousands)

### TOP FIVE BF VIETNAM MAPS (WEEK ENDING MARCH 28, 2004)



KEY ■ PERCENT OF ALL MAPS PLAYED ■ NUMBER OF HOURS PLAYED (Millions)

### GAMES WITH HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF 'PERMANENT' SERVERS (SNAPSHOT AT 1800HRS, MARCH 30, 2004)



KEY ■ SERVERS ■ PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL



# WELCOME TO MY WORLD...

**MORTEN BYOM** – Anarchy Online: Alien Invasion

**"FOR A LONG** time, we've wanted to give players more power and the means to affect the world they live in," says *Anarchy Online* lead world designer Morten Byom when asked about the underlying direction of the newly announced expansion pack for the popular sci-fi MMOG. "*Alien Invasion* is part of this strategy." Announced last month, *Alien Invasion* takes the hitherto enclosed world of Rubi-ka and unleashes an onslaught from above, affecting all players regardless of affiliation or factional ties.

"The aliens appear with gigantic starships above Rubi-ka. From these, they launch a massive assault across the planet," describes Morten excitedly. "These attacks will be centred on areas with a dense population and it's up to the players to fight off the invading forces. There will also be opportunities to launch strikes on the alien landing vessels. On entering these vessels, players will get to explore the inside of

the ships and they can also learn more about the enemy forces that are attacking their homes."

*Alien Invasion* isn't solely about the new enemy, though. If you play, you'll also finally be given the powers to create your own cities and communities. "The biggest challenge came from finding a balance between giving players freedom to build cities that are unique, while ensuring that they function within the rules of the game," says Morten. "We couldn't have players destroying a popular hunting area by building a city on top of it. Luckily, the size of Rubi-ka made it easy to find suitable areas for the players to develop and build their cities."

Fortunately, developer Funcom isn't too worried about the effect that player-power will have on the landscape. As Morten explains: "There were no objections to giving players the ability to

build and sculpture their own areas, even if this means the world will change as new player cities start appearing. I'm eagerly awaiting the first cities to start showing up so I can go and visit them myself."

Prior to *Alien Invasion*, Morten's main area of concern on Rubi-ka was with the *Shadowlands* expansion, being responsible for designing the look of the Nascence and Penumbra areas. "I'll admit the world of *Shadowlands* holds a special place in my heart with its beauty," he confesses. "Although I'm proud of the entire world of Rubi-ka and all its great variations. At times, I consider it my second home." As soon as the thousands of *Anarchy Online* players start building their own cities, so will they. Unless the aliens wipe them out first... [22]

■ **Publisher** Funcom ■ **Developer:** Funcom  
■ **ETA:** TBC ■ **Website:** [www.anarchy-online.com](http://www.anarchy-online.com)

**"The aliens appear with gigantic starships above Rubi-ka. From these, they launch a massive assault across the planet"**

MORTEN BYOM – ANARCHY ONLINE: ALIEN INVASION





There are more odd creatures here than a local freak show.

**Mouthing off in...**

# EVERQUEST II

## THE DETAILS

**DEVELOPER** Sony Online Entertainment  
**PUBLISHER** Ubisoft  
**WEBSITE** [www.everquest2.com](http://www.everquest2.com)  
**ETA** Q4 2004

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- If anything qualifies as a next-generation MMOG, it's this
- Designed to make players feel like heroes from the start
- Professional voiceovers add incredible immersion
- Combo attacks enhance group play

**CV**

**SOE**  
SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT

## SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT

The king of the MMOG genre. If it's online and it's popular, chances are SOE is behind it. Based in San Diego, the firm has been raking in those subscription fees since 1999.

**1999** *EverQuest* launches and modems across the world start heating up. With seven expansion packs over the next five years, EQ grows to over half a million players.

**2003** *PlanetSide* offers an alternative from the fantasy fare, letting trigger-happy future warriors shoot at each other in a never-ending war. And then in the same year, *Star Wars Galaxies* finally answers the question, "What would *EverQuest* be like if it had Stormtroopers?" Much like this popular science-fiction-based MMOG as it happens.

**First UK mag to get hands-on? Like Paul 'Craps' Presley needs an excuse to go to Vegas**

**"WE STARTED** working on voiceovers about a year ago and didn't really know what to think about them. With most games that have voices you listen to them for ten minutes then turn them off. Right now though, it's at the point where if you interact with an NPC that doesn't have a voiceover, you get really frustrated." Andrew Sites, producer on *EverQuest II*, is looking out over the *EverQuest* fans that have assembled in the Las Vegas Hilton, commenting on the reaction to the latest snippet of information released about the year's biggest MMOG title.

The voice acting was revealed just days before the fifth anniversary Fan Faire





**"No, that was my half-brother in the film. I'm Playmobillas."**

commenced (see report on page 92), and any doubts as to whether the spoken word element would help or hinder the game have quickly been dispelled.

#### **"IN A WORLD..."**

Steve Danuser, *EQII*'s community manager, agrees with Sites. "It really surprised a lot of people just how much the voices add to the game's atmosphere. It makes the world feel more 'real'. Once you're playing the game and you see how real everything looks, hearing everything in voiceover too keeps the consistency high."

Of course, that consistency is dependent on the acting quality, something Sites became aware of early on. "When we started we had each designer writing a quest wear a headset and record their own voices," he recalls. "That worked for about three days."

Instead the option to go with professional voice actors was given the green light and the difference is striking. Norrath now has a more vibrant, living feel to it. More of a believable world rather than a simple gaming environment.

#### **A FAIRE START**

The Fan Faire is the team's first major chance to show how close they are to preparing the code for a public beta testing. It's also the first chance to expose it in a non-controlled environment, and our first chance to actually get a hands-on experience and see just how good it looks in operation.

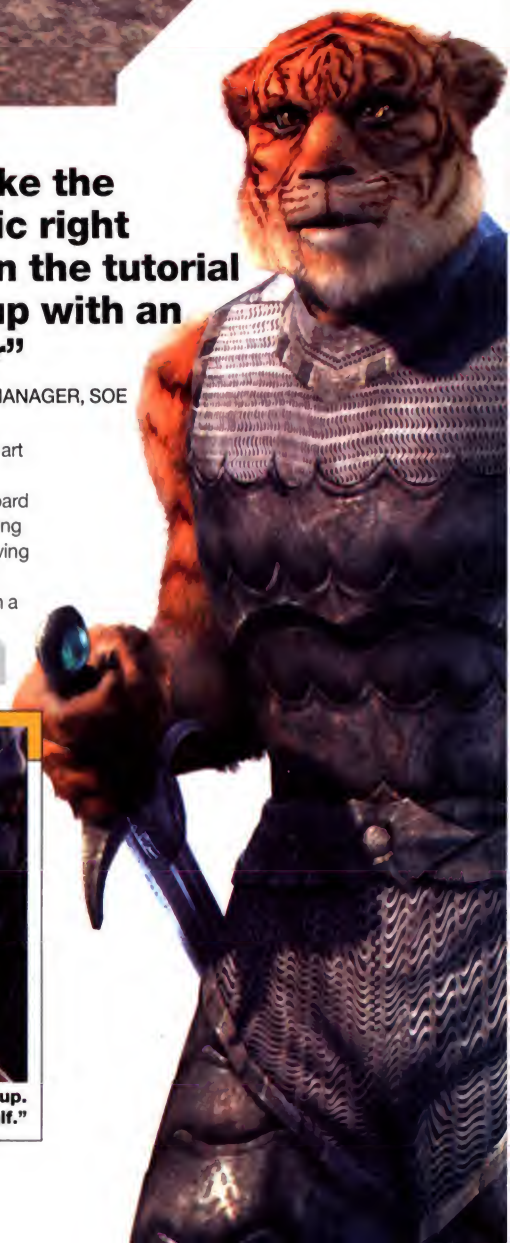
Early screenshots released to websites the world over hinted that this would be something special to behold and the video promos further cemented things. But nothing quite prepares you for just

**"We want to make the player feel heroic right away, so even on the tutorial island you end up with an 'epic' encounter"**

**STEVE DANUSER** COMMUNITY MANAGER, SOE

how visually striking *EQII*'s 40-strong art team has made things.

Players enter the new Norrath aboard a small cargo ship heading for a training island (à la *Morrowind*'s opening), having been plucked out of the sea with no memories. The boat is little more than a tutorial, with the captain giving you simple orders to familiarise you with the



## **CASTING CALL**

### **SO, ANY FAMOUS CAMEOS POPPING UP IN THE NEW NORRATH?**

One benefit of working for Sony is that the team can call upon the company's film industry connections. With the use of professional voiceovers having been added to the mix, it doesn't take a genius to ask the obvious question. We did too.

"We're working on a couple of names," says Sites rather guardedly, "but haven't finalised any contracts yet. Hopefully we'll be announcing those in a month or two." Not even a hint? "Well if everything goes through... a certain popular fantasy movie out recently - we might have actors from there."

Really? The stars of *Beastmaster* in *EQII*? "One that's rather larger in scale and may have won numerous awards recently," corrects Danuser. "But it's still up in the air," quickly adds Sites. Nonetheless it would be one hell of a coup if it comes off, one that Danuser is fully aware of. "Our people know all the agents and can work on those contracts," he says ruefully. "That's a huge advantage for us that we know other companies - ones without these links - will still have to try and compete with." Even if it's just the actors who played the orcs doing some growling, we'd be impressed.



**"Level 20 Wiz looking for group. Send /Tell to Gandalf."**



## "The litmus test for any new mechanic is – is it fun? If it is we keep it, if it isn't, we chop it"

STEVE DANUSER  
COMMUNITY MANAGER, SOE

controls. That said, it's a tutorial that sees you fighting a rogue goblin and being menaced by a passing dragon who ignites most of the boat with an impressively realised fireball attack. As opening sequences go, this is the fantasy MMOG equivalent of a Bond film.

### MILTON QEYNOS

"We wanted players to be entertained from the beginning, to give them enough information to become familiar with it all and to be able to get into the game quickly," explains Sites.

"With a lot of previous games players are made pretty weak early on, and you only get to fight weak opponents like rats and spiders," adds Danuser. "We want to make the player feel heroic right away, so that's why even on the tutorial island you end up with an 'epic' encounter – you go in and fight a boss."

From the boat we were dropped onto the Isle Of Refuge, where the initial

decisions about character types are made. Although you select your race before you start out – complete with *EVE Online*-style facial tweaking – unlike *EQ Live* (as the first game is now called), the sequel doesn't lay down too many restrictions early on. To start you're simply asked which of four paths you want to follow (the standard wizard, fighter, cleric, rogue stereotypes) by an island guard, are given the appropriate pointers to helpful NPCs and sent on your way. This may sound like dumbing down, but in practice it has the effect of making things seem more streamlined and immediately accessible to the non-hardcore role-playing fans out there. Which of course is where *EQII* is being pitched. Nonetheless, as

players ascend through the 50 initial levels, more varied class options become available, all tying in to the overriding story arc taking place.

The training island also demonstrates the design team's notions of making the game feel more 'heroic' right out.

Early quests all have intriguing stories attached and initial levels are quickly reached.

Within an hour or two we were already experimenting with impressive-looking spell and combat effects. The feeling is definitely not one of level grinding, but questing and feeling important.

Dungeon raiding still makes up a large part of the *EQII* experience, although with a maximum of six players per group, the team has borrowed an idea from one of the stable's other popular titles – *PlanetSide* – and introduced a 'platoon'-style feature that allows multiple groups to team together for greater rewards and tactical play.

Once we'd had our fill of the training island and its goblin invasion mini-story, we sought out the two 'immigration officers' and made the second of the *EQII*'s big decisions – Qeynos or Freeport. The well-publicised



## THE MATCH GAME



No dragon punches though.

### ONE NEW FEATURE THAT'LL MAKE AN IMMEDIATE IMPRESSION IS THE 'HEROIC EFFECT' WHEEL. PROVIDING YOU SPEAK 'RUNISH'

When certain spells or skills are unleashed, a runic wheel pops up with a particular bonus on offer (anything from a power boost to protection). The key is to combine the just used effect with others that tie into the displayed runes to form a sort of *Street Fighter*-style combo attack. Get them all correct and the bonus is yours.

The clever part is that this is primarily a group effect. If you're questing with a team, any member can cast the appropriate spells to unleash the effect, encouraging teamwork and communication.

"We'll see how it works out," muses Sites. "Mainly it's designed to give more variety to combat, to give the player something more to do than just targeting and hitting auto-attack. There are a number of features similar to this that we've been trying out through the closed beta period that may or may not work out."

Getting combat right is one of the trickiest parts of any MMOG, something Danuser is well aware of. "Yeah, it's kind of a fine line," he nods. "We don't want to get things too much like a twitch-based console game but at the same time, just because you pick a fighter class it doesn't mean your job should be boring. We want it to always be a tactical experience, where you get rewards for playing your class well, taking advantage of opportunities and knowing how to make the most of your abilities."







Rats, the MMOG staple, still make an appearance in *EQII*.



"Personally, I feel this game will be grrrrreat! Sorry, force of habit."



That'll leave a cool, minty freshness. Or a scar. Probably a scar.



Jaws packs in early for the day.

## FORGET NORWAY



Wild animals will even interact with each other, hunting in packs and behaving all 'real' like.

### WHERE CAN YOU SEE LIONS? ONLY IN NORRATH. COME TO NORRATH, WE'VE GOT LIONS...

Norrath itself offers an incredible amount for these parties to explore, with locations old and new cropping up around every corner. The infamous Blackburrow has been revamped for the new generation, while every type of wilderness, from mist-tinged swamps to snow-covered mountains, puts in an appearance offering just about everything you could hope for.

We wanted to see lions and elephants, for instance, and were given directions by the team and quickly dispatched to a scene that could have come straight from Kenya with herds grazing at water pools, lion prides hunting smaller animals, and

the sun-caked savannah extending as far as the eye could see. In fact it was only the presence of a giant rock creature that looked like it had come straight from the set of *Galaxy Quest* that reminded us this wasn't a travelogue but a fantasy game.

Brilliantly the NPC creatures have several formation routines built in that can be strictly regimented for 'intelligent' enemies, or loose grouping where animals are concerned. Plus they all interact with each other according to basic ecological patterns. All of which didn't stop us being ripped to shreds by hungry lions, but did make us understand why.

background story tells of the partial destruction of Norrath, the levelling of the lands and the rise of the two remaining cities – one focused on notions of 'good', the other 'evil'.

Choosing citizenship sets you up for the rest of the game, pitching your loyalties and shaping your future development. We opted for an easier time of it and headed for the light side in Qeynos, immediately arriving in a bustling medieval-style market town – easily one

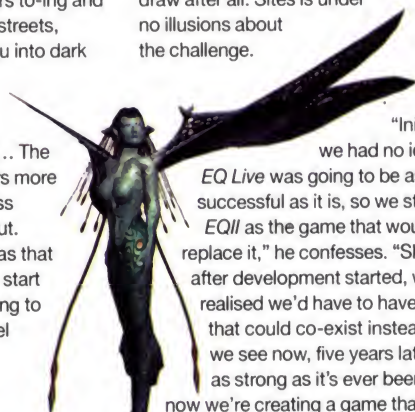
of the most beautifully realised in a MMOG to date. Market traders to-ing and fro-ing, guards patrolling the streets, thieves and hustlers luring you into dark corners offering deals, gossipers, statues, fountains, temples, narrow streets, sprawling docksides... The more nefarious Freeport offers more of an Arabian city feel with less pleasant overtones throughout. One thing readily apparent was that with only two central cities to start from, the *EQII* servers are going to capture a far more 'active' feel than the dozens of newbie locations offered in *EQ Live*.

### BRING IT HOME

Sony still won't offer any concrete release schedules, although the guarded comments of Sites, Danuser and any other member of the team we pressed during our visit all pointed towards a beta within a month or two, and a release towards the end of the year – although possibly not as far along as Christmas.

But will the gamble pay off for the 80-man team and millions of dollars of

investment? *EQ Live* is still one hell of a draw after all. Sites is under no illusions about the challenge.



"Initially we had no idea that *EQ Live* was going to be as successful as it is, so we started *EQII* as the game that would replace it," he confesses. "Shortly after development started, we realised we'd have to have a game that could co-exist instead. As we see now, five years later, *EQ* is as strong as it's ever been and now we're creating a game that ties in with all the lore and the history. It's definitely designed to stand alone, but still stand together with the mythology of the original."

"It's just a matter of building the best, most fun game we can," Danuser concludes. "That's always at the core of our game. That's always the final litmus test for whatever mechanic we add into the game – is it fun? If it is we keep it, if it isn't we chop it." [E2]



It's getting hot in here. So take off all your armour. Woah, yeah.



# GAMERS REUNITED

Finding people online to play your favourite game can be tricky. **Richie Shoemaker** looks at the utilities available to help ease your pain and inflict it on others



## IF YOU

want to get your money's worth out of most games, you really have to take them online. If you know where to look, chances are you'll find someone willing to take you on – but the problem is knowing where to look in the first place.

Although most games ship with their own in-built code that

will find and filter servers across the world, often their features are basic. This means they're fine for a quick blast, but if you want to keep a list of the friendliest and fastest dedicated servers, track your new online buddies or hook up with clan mates, installing a dedicated game server browser is the only way to go.

There are quite a few to

choose from and they vary wildly in terms of ease of use, features available, the number of supported games, popularity and the all-important hit on your wallet. A free server browser may not drain your pockets, but it may suck away your enthusiasm as it blasts you with adverts before each game starts. Similarly, another piece of

software may support hundreds of titles, new and old, but if you only play three or four of the latest shooters, all you want to do is be able to connect quickly and get to the action.

The following four are the best of the bunch.

Take your pick...



"I can see you!"

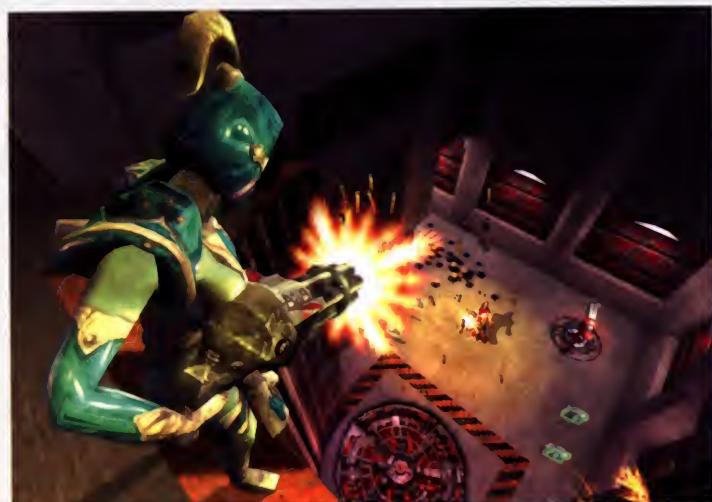


Stars and stripes? Someone's gonna die...



## QTRACKER

■ £Free (optional \$20 registration) | Current Version: 3.74 | Games supported: 68 | [www.qtracker.com](http://www.qtracker.com) | Size: 3.3MB



QTracker is designed to get you up and running as soon as possible.

**QTRACKER** doesn't faff about. Designed to facilitate a speedy entrance into the FPS of your choice, what it does (and does very well) is enable you to pick a game, server and map with the minimum of fuss and get to the business of online slaughter without feeling you have to engage in smackdown talk before the show starts. Clearly, the idea here is to spend your time playing.

To ensure a hassle-free transition, you can configure the software to repeatedly scan for player slots on your favourite servers, saving endless use of the refresh button. Other useful features include a very powerful buddy search,

downloadable pre-configured filters, streaming music and comprehensive options for LAN support – one in the eye for that which is All-Seeing.

It's not perfect though – set up can be slow since there's no documentation. However, if you know your onions, then it's a solid investment (being free).

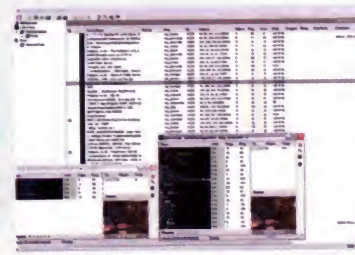
**THE GOOD:** Gets to the action fast, good LAN support, stream MP3 files as you play, quick server query & filtering.  
**THE BAD:** No documentation, configuring can be painful.

**PCZONE VERDICT**

**74**



Then you can kill people...



...which is more interesting than this.



# KALI

■ \$20 | Current Version: 2.613 | Games supported: 398 | [www.kali.net](http://www.kali.net) | Size: 2.7MB

**BACK FROM** beyond the grave, Kali made a return to the Internet last year and has managed to reassert itself in a relatively short space of time. The original version predates its rivals by some years, but of course its leave of absence will probably ensure that, in terms of popularity at least, Kali will always be playing catch-up.

Which would be a shame because despite the rather dull presentation of the client software, the fact it supports almost as many titles as the opposition (including hundreds of old titles) without the need to

pry on your PC habits or drill ads into your head is very welcome.

It's not as easy to navigate as All-Seeing Eye and filters are a pain to configure – but explore it and you'll end up with a powerful solution for all your games.

**THE GOOD:** Quick server query and filtering, caters for plenty of golden oldies, no adware or spyware, cheap lifetime registration.

**THE BAD:** Not pretty, ASE pips it but for the wealth of Kali's supported games.

**PCZONE VERDICT** 78



Kali supports loads of games.



Looks like somebody needs to do some weeding.



# HYPERLOBBY

■ £Free | Current Version: 3.5.60 | Games supported: 20+ | [hyperfighter.jinak.cz](http://hyperfighter.jinak.cz) | Size: 0.9MB

**HYPERLOBBY** is either a program you won't be able to live without or one you won't give two hoots about. Why? Because it's been developed solely for flight sim aficionados, who, let's be honest, aren't particularly well catered for in this particular arena.

Although features like a chat window and the now-standard buddy lists are present and correct, such features are rather basic compared to the competition. The UI is very cluttered and rather badly laid out too. However, we shouldn't be too harsh: it was designed as a hub for propeller heads everywhere, and it succeeds in this without the need to impress with frivolous features.

Sadly (and this is indicative of the genre rather than the software), everyone seems happy to play *IL-2 Sturmovik* or *IL-2 Forgotten Battles*. It's a good game, but if the developers supported other sims they could afford to tart things up a bit.

**THE GOOD:** Supports all the major flight sims, it's free and there's no ad/spyware.

**THE BAD:** No filtering options, bad layout and if you're not a flight sim freak, don't bother.

**PCZONE VERDICT**

68



Flight sims only, but good for the community.



EasyJet's new fleet goes for the retro look.

# ALL-SEEING EYE

■ \$15 per year (\$30 lifetime), 21-day trial | Current Version: 3.5.60 | Games supported: 130+ | [www.udpssoft.com/eye2](http://www.udpssoft.com/eye2) | Size: 0.9MB



Looks dull, but works a treat.

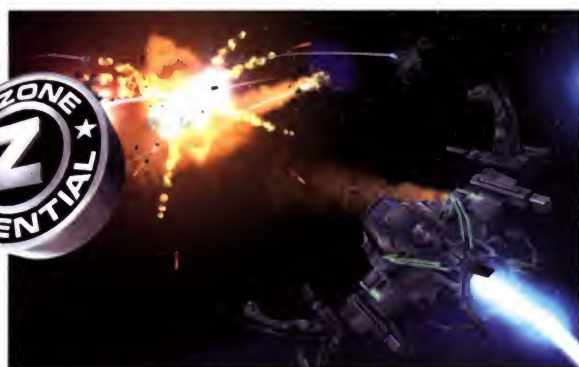
**IT'S** estimated that close to 50 per cent of all action gamers choose All-Seeing Eye – and with good reason. It's fast, simple, powerful and supports a

large number of games (even a few strategy and simulation titles). The filtering options are easily the best out there – you can select by game version, mods running or even limit your server search to Chile, if necessary. Yes, the look is stark and cold, but the use of a few icons and coloured text ensure on-screen information isn't lost among the haze of columns and rows as it is in Qtracker and Kali.

The problem with ASE is its popularity. At peak times (which

is most of the day), the server scanning can be sluggish for unregistered users and it's not always obvious if the program is refreshing or twiddling its thumbs. Despite this, once you've tinkered with the powerful options and search tools, it's difficult to fault. Kali and Qtracker give it a good run, but if you're an FPS fan, All-Seeing Eye is the best there is.

**THE GOOD:** No ads and no nasty spyware, unrivalled



To infinity and beyond!

filtering options, very popular.

**THE BAD:** Server querying is slow at peak times, no chat feature.

**PCZONE VERDICT** 85

All the utilities featured here can be found on our cover discs this month, so give them a try. The PC ZONE gaming servers can be found at [www.zonegames.co.uk](http://www.zonegames.co.uk)



# FIGHT CLUB



**FIRST RULE OF FIGHT CLUB: PC ZONE OWNZ JØØ**  
**FIGHT CLUB MODERATORS: METALFACE & REX MUNDI**

**IT'S BEEN A** long time coming, but we're finally proud to announce that the PC ZONE Public Gaming Servers have had a major upgrade. Thanks to our shiny new ninja hardware, we're now offering our lovely readers a healthy mix of up-to-the-minute online shooters and old classics that stand the test of time.

■ *Condition Zero* joins the regular *Counter-Strike* servers, while *Battlefield Vietnam* offers an alternative to *BF1942*'s Desert Combat mod. *Day Of Defeat*, *Call of Duty* and *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory* cater for your WWII needs, while *UT2004* and *Ull:XMP* servers nestle alongside the existing *UT2003*

and *Team Fortress* matches. Finally, if you're seeking a slightly more strategic challenge, *Savage* provides a healthy mix of RTS thought and FPS action.

■ Not that this is all we're going to offer.

The ZONE servers are going to be run on a rotational basis, with new titles replacing older ones, keeping you ahead of the game and ensuring you've always got somewhere to go to find first-class online action.

■ To connect to any of the games, go to [www.zonegames.co.uk](http://www.zonegames.co.uk) for a list of the server addresses. As always, we recommend using a server browser utility (see our feature on page 100) to find out where the action is taking place. See you online!

**COME &  
'AVE A GO!**  
[www.zonegames.co.uk](http://www.zonegames.co.uk)  
**for all the info**

## WHO'S WHO

Paul Presley	Prezzer
Anthony Holden	Shokupan
Jamie Sefton	NorthernScum
Phil Clark	ShitKicker
Jamie Malcolm	Braveart
Martin Korda	Nameless One
Will Porter	Batsphinx
Phil Wand	Wandy
Suzy Wallace	Uzibat



Make friends and watch them die in *BF Vietnam*.



*Call Of Duty* provides frantic period action.



Teamwork is key in *UT2004*.



RTS fans can get a kick from *Savage*.

## UPCOMING FIGHT CLUB EVENTS

### THURSDAY MAY 6

6.30pm – 9.00pm

*Unreal Tournament 2004*

### THURSDAY JUNE 3

6.30pm – 9.00pm

*Battlefield Vietnam*

### THURSDAY JULY 1

6.30pm – 9.00pm

*Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory*



An oldie but a goodie: *Enemy Territory* keeps up the pace.



# ZONECHAT

WITH THE GIFT OF THE GAB, IT'S...

**WITH** Prezzer away in Vegas, it was up to young Will to rule the roost in the last Zone Chat – something he achieved with blinding incompetence. Nevertheless, much fun was had by all.

High spots included Wendy's jokes about monkeys, various people fighting for Suzy's attention and Will's thrilling tale of the time that Mohammed Al Fayed told him to "F\*\* off". We also spoke about games, obviously, and everyone agreed that *Far Cry* kicks ass, while *Sky One's Gameville* programme is a big bag of wank.

By far the proudest member of the IRC chat, however, was **ads1** who won the competition – claiming a rare *Max Payne 2* jacket, a copy of *Singles: Flirt Up Your Life* and some furry handcuffs. So kudos to him, and good luck to his girlfriend...

If you want to take part in the next Zone Chat, you'll require an IRC program – we recommend mIRC ([www.mirc.com](http://www.mirc.com)) as the most straightforward and easy to use. Once installed and set up, log on to



[irc.uk.quakenet.org](http://irc.uk.quakenet.org) then type /join #pcz to enter the PC ZONE channel. There you'll find a whole gaggle of your fellow Zoners, eager to hold court on matters of great import. Or just what they're having for tea.

This month, Zone Chat is on Wednesday May 5, 5-7pm in the #pcz channel, with the usual shouting, emotes and competitions. Make sure you have this issue of *PC ZONE* to hand, as you'll need it to win. We'll be talking about all things *Half-Life 2*, as well as answering your questions about the mag. See you then!

**WEDNESDAY  
MAY 5  
5.00PM – 7.00PM**

## LAN ROVER

**STEVE 'SCALPER' RANDALL LOWERS HIS LAN-DING GEAR...**

■ Not many events this month, which will no doubt help the [www.fragurself.co.uk](http://www.fragurself.co.uk) posse to fill its 80 spaces. The event runs from May 21-23, costs £45 and is being held in Manchester.

■ [www.flintfrag.co.uk](http://www.flintfrag.co.uk) continues to host one-day events in the Holiday Inn near Northop Hall, Wales. It costs £10 or £2.50 for spectators. Check the website for dates.

■ [www.gorlangaming.co.uk](http://www.gorlangaming.co.uk) is being hosted by a couple of the Men Of Beer clan from May 7-9 for 30 gamers in Wiltshire – a snip at £20.

■ [www.multiplay.co.uk](http://www.multiplay.co.uk) is hosting its regular 'smaller' event in Stratford-upon-Avon from May 28-31. Seating has increased to 100 places and the price has also popped up to £50 for the three days. Expect to meet the organisers of the bigger Multiplay events in a closer environment. These events often include barbecues, frizbee and football, as well as the competitions that you'd expect from a good LAN party.

■ New to LAN Rover, but celebrating event seven (called Eclipse) is [www.moongames.co.uk](http://www.moongames.co.uk). It's running a 48-hour LAN party from May 21 at 7pm

in Kettering, Northampton. 25 shiny pounds will cover you for the whole event.

■ Summer traditionally has a drop in LAN parties, but it's also when people have more time to attend. If you want to organise your own event, take a look at last month's *PC ZONE* for the Getting Started guide to hosting your own LAN party. If you get it organised, let me know details of numbers, costs and location at least two months in advance. Send details to: [scalper@ggla.co.uk](mailto:scalper@ggla.co.uk) – Scalper out.



Moongames is holding its seventh event.

## GUILDHALL



### ▲ MAKE NEW FRIENDS – THEN SHOOT TO KILL

Long summer evenings stretching out ahead of you? Looking for that special group to share your love of group gaming? Wanna, to be blunt, be in my gang? Check out some of the guilds and clans currently recruiting members and soon you too can find happiness, togetherness and a sense of belonging. Or similar.

**CLAN** Elite Soldier Squad – ESS

**CONTACT** ESS SOCOM – Clan leader

**WEBSITE** [www.ess-team.vze.com](http://www.ess-team.vze.com)

**MAIN GAME** *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down*, *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down – Team Sabre*

**DETAILS** ESS is about trusting one another and forming a formidable fighting unit – we have 17 members and rising. We want members who want to join a friendly clan and play together effectively. We at ESS believe that teamwork is above all else and is vital to becoming a great clan.

**CLAN** GRW Clan

**CONTACT** JJXB@grwclan.tk

**WEBSITE** [www.grwclan.tk](http://www.grwclan.tk)

**MAIN GAME** *Diablo II: Lord Of Destruction*

**DETAILS** We are a clan that plays *Diablo II: Lord Of Destruction*, but we're hoping to expand into other games too. See [www.grwclan.tk](http://www.grwclan.tk) for more details.

**CLAN** =TDR= The Demonic Radicals

**CONTACT** [wrafreysworld@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:wrafreysworld@blueyonder.co.uk)

**WEBSITE** [www.tdrclan.co.uk](http://www.tdrclan.co.uk)

**MAIN GAME** *Counter-Strike*, *Battlefield Vietnam*

**DETAILS** TDR has been a growing C-S clan from the early days of the game. We're now a top UK C-S clan in the Enemy Down ladder. TDR is now hoping to expand with *Battlefield Vietnam* for fun, friendly and competitive matches against the best.

**CLAN** LTGamer & TM (Life Time Gamers & Team Merlin)

**CONTACT** [chrysis@wtmord.net](mailto:chrysis@wtmord.net)

**WEBSITE** [www.ltgamer.com](http://www.ltgamer.com)

**MAIN GAME** *Call Of Duty*

**DETAILS** We're an international *Call Of Duty* clan with members from Europe and North America. Our emphasis is on community and fun and we're always on the lookout for new members. If you're over 18 and like a laugh get in touch. You won't be sorry!

**CLAN** [DAD] Clan

**CONTACT** Nexus8 or Monty73

**WEBSITE** [www.dadclan.co.uk](http://www.dadclan.co.uk)

**MAIN GAME** *Call Of Duty*, *Medal Of Honor*

**DETAILS** Started by dads for dads in 2000, this is a big family clan which requires you to actually be a dad (of any age) to join. We don't require members to be active players – we play for fun, though we have many top players and are a fun community.

**CLAN** Harbinger Heavy Industries (HHI)

**CONTACT** Shard or John Prescott at [website@recruitment](mailto:website@recruitment)

**WEBSITE** [www.eve-hhi.com](http://www.eve-hhi.com)

**MAIN GAME** *EVE Online*

**DETAILS** Looking for experienced (cruiser drivers and better), honest, mature players for large friendly *EVE* corp. We supply all equipment in exchange for hard work doing whatever you enjoy and some mining. :-). HHI is also a member of the coveted Fountain Alliance. No time wasters, non-team players or pirate wannabes please.

To feature your clan in Guildhall, all you need to do is send your details and no more than 50 words describing your group to: [online.zone@pczone.co.uk](mailto:online.zone@pczone.co.uk) (subject line: GUILDHALL). Alternatively, write to: Guildhall, PC ZONE, 9 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BQ.





The Quest For The Holy Rust-Proofing Of Zantarrk.



It's all kicking off, innit?



Nice cloak. Not sure about the rabbit ears, though.

# BIOSFEAR

■ Price: Free download (+ £4.99 monthly subscription) | Pub: Tiscali Games | Dev: Nako | ETA: Out Now | [www.biosfear.co.uk](http://www.biosfear.co.uk)

**REQUIRES** PIII 300, 64MB RAM, 8MB 3D card and a 56K modem **DESIRES** PIII 450, 128MB, 16MB 3D card and a broadband connection

**Richie Shoemaker is no stranger to complicated MMOGs, but this South Korean import left him flummoxed**

**CAN YOU** imagine 10,000,000 people playing the same game? In my tiny brain, it's hard enough to picture 10,000, but that's the number of players it's claimed *BiosFear* can support within its online walls, should it ever be necessary to house such a number. Roughly the population of Belgium. Or Wales if you include its herbivorous occupants.

In reality, those numbers are far fewer. Half a million regulars are signed up in the game's native South Korea (known

locally as *Laghaim*), where it's still being supported some three years since the initial release. Since that's a rather respectable sum of players, it's something of a surprise to learn that here in the UK, the total number of players online at any one time rarely exceeds 500. Something has clearly been lost in translation.

## SPAWN STAR

It's not hard to see the appeal of the game. Compared to the likes of *EverQuest*, *BiosFear* is relatively simple to ease into, closer in scope to the likes of *Diablo* than anything else.

After a thorough examination of the online player's guide, you can, in the space of a few hectic hours, get a character up to the dizzy heights of level 20 and have 10,000 units of currency (the infamous 'limes') sitting in the bank waiting to be spent. Plus, there are only four character classes to choose from and a handful of stats to ponder. Monsters

spawn so quickly outside the safe starting city of Laglamia that you immediately get the impression you're cooking with gas and perhaps the fabled level 90 you need to attain in order to foster an AI sidekick doesn't seem so far away after all.

No sooner have you mastered the basics, however, before it all goes awry. Having dispatched literally thousands of armoured mice, wolves and poisonous crabs (sounds itchy), the time comes to

find a more lucrative way to earn some experience, namely through accepting quests. Problem is, where do you go and who do you speak to in order to get a mission that will earn you a fat stack of cash and experience?

Why, you visit a trader, buy a mission receiver, equip it and activate it of course. How do I know this? Well, after pouring through the online guide and being none the wiser, I ended up having to trawl the player forums. To add insult to injury, to complete my first quest I had to travel to some place called Dekardi, which again wasn't in any of the

## INPERSPECTIVE

### FINAL FANTASY XI

Not reviewed

No word on a European release, but having signed its millionth customer recently, this is clearly going to be a big game when it arrives alongside its PS2 cousin. If you want an online game with an Eastern flavour, there really is only one choice.

### EVE ONLINE

Reviewed Issue 139, Score 91%

Set in space with 5,000 star systems to trade between, *EVE* is as far removed from *BiosFear* as you can get. It's also the most attractive online game in circulation and boasts a similarly welcoming base of players.



A mission receiver for 450 limes? What the hell are you on about?





Siberian tigers are not on the endangered species list here.



Humans are the long-range weapon specialists.



It looks busy, but there aren't many places to explore early on.

## MEETING PEOPLE IS EASY



Nice people, shame about the game.

### CARING, SHARING COMMUNITIES ONLINE. WILL WONDERS NEVER CEASE?

Playing through *BiosFear*, I was bemused as to how so many people got to command such high-level characters. Expensive robes, oversized guns and shining suits of golden armour adorn most of the players, so clearly there's something positive in the game that warrants attention.

The answer lies not in the mechanics of the game, but in the personalities of the people that play it. In all my travels online, rarely have I met a friendlier or more mature bunch of people willing to aid the new player. Thanks to them, the idiosyncrasies of the interface and game mechanics soon became clear and I was lavished with special items. Even in combat against other players, there was a courtesy afforded to me that I found rather refreshing. Gawd bless 'em.

local guidebooks. I wandered about for a couple of hours, got ignored by a couple of locals and died twice before finding out (thanks to the forums again) that I'd been traipsing across the Plains Of Dekardi all along. For a game that claims to offer an easy introduction to the genre, this is just one of many aspects that are unnecessarily complicated and poorly signposted.

## "For a game that claims to offer an easy introduction, several aspects are overly complicated and poorly signposted"

However, complicated isn't a criticism that can be levelled at the graphics. Without wanting to appear rude, they're dated to the point of extinction. Day to night transitions are sudden, weather effects are basic and the creatures you meet in the wildernesses, though varied and numerous, are derivative and uninspiring. More importantly, there's a real lack of individuality to the player characters and you'll often see numerous people wearing the same clothing and wielding similar

weapons – a state of affairs that does little to foster any long-term aspirations on your part.

### WARCRAFT IS COMING

All of which points to a lack of any real depth outside of player interaction. The storyline is decent enough background material, but has little impact on the day-to-day advancement of the world. Major events, though

very cheap and stable alternative to the mainstream MMOGs favoured in the West. Had it arrived soon after its home debut three years ago, it might well have caused a minor stir. Now, with its biggest rival – *World Of Warcraft* – just around the corner, we'd be surprised if anyone will be playing it in six months time, home or away. [24]

### PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Low technical requirements
- ✓ Helpful community
- ✓ Cheap
- ✗ Dated graphics and poor sound
- ✗ Basic features
- ✗ Poor documentation

# 60

By today's standards, this is basic



# DARK AGE OF CAMELOT: TRIALS OF ATLANTIS



Three heads are better than one.

■ £19.99 | Pub: Mythic Entertainment |  
Dev: Mythic Entertainment | ETA: Out Now |  
[www.trialssofarlantis.com](http://www.trialssofarlantis.com)

REQUIRES *Dark Age Of Camelot* and *Shrouded Isles*

**Max Donnelly** cries "Hung jury!"  
about this undersea test of patience

**JUST AS** April brings rain and too much beer makes you think karaoke's an art form, the passing of a few months without the ka-ching! of new sales sees the purveyors of online games churning out yet another add-on for their pay-to-play cash cows. Not that that's a bad thing – killing the same old orcs and goblins again and again loses its appeal after a

while, and I like a change of pace as much as the next axe-wielding Norseman. *Trials Of Atlantis*, Mythic's latest expansion for *Dark Age Of Camelot* showcases both the good and bad about these extra-cost add-ons. When it's good, it's very good – but often, it's rather pedestrian.

## THE MAN FROM...

The centrepiece of *Atlantis* is the expansive new adventuring area dubbed, erm, 'Atlantis'. It's a series of islands and sunken regions, which are all that remain of the mythical land that the sea swallowed up ages ago. Now it seems to have spat it out again, along with a host of new monsters, gobs of treasure and a set of 'trials' guaranteed to give the hardest of adventurers a run for their gold pieces.

**"It's clear this is not an add-on for the low-level player"**

Set up by the doomed denizens of Atlantis, this gauntlet is designed to test any would-be interlopers – and has the nice side effect of granting some pretty impressive boons to those who pass the tests. You can score artifacts, which gain experience like a player character, and grow in power, as well as Master Levels, a nifty way to give level-50 characters (the highest you can be) a new way to progress once again.

Since many of the encounters and adventures in *Atlantis* also take place under water, there's a large financial investment in water-breathing potions or magic items. Add in the fact that the



Like a ghosted edition of *Gladiators*.



"Is it just me or is it hot in here?"

beasties are stronger than the average dungeon denizen, and it's clear this is not an add-on for the low-level player – nor is it really for the casual gamer.

If you're not at least level 40, there's truly no reason to venture to Atlantis, as you'll simply be eaten, and quickly. You need levels, money and good equipment – and preferably, a large group or guild behind you – to get your money's worth. While the expansion upgrades the graphics engine and interface, as well as making user mods easier – benefits that all players will enjoy – the added content is strictly for the elite. It doesn't help that most of the stuff Mythic added in, while nifty in theory, has been buggy and subject to near-constant revision since the game's release.

Still, if you're a hardcore fan, you'll want it just for the neat interface tweaks, the one new race per realm

and the slick look – provided you have a current-generation graphics card and the *Shrouded Isles* expansion pack. Just don't expect to tear through *Atlantis* in a weekend, and steel yourself for all sorts of oddities when you do. Otherwise, go work on your Hibernian-bashing skills the old-fashioned way. **PCV**

## INPERSPECTIVE

### EVERQUEST: GATES OF DISCORD

Reviewed Issue 142, Score 68%  
This umpteenth expansion to the reigning king of online RPGs is for those who've exhausted the rest of this ever-expanding game world – but it doesn't do much to draw in new blood.

### PLANETSIDE:

### CORE COMBAT

Reviewed Issue 139, Score 49%  
Despite the great concept – vast underground battlefields, alien technology and freaky neon lighting – the result is just more empty space for people not to fight in.

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Updated graphics
- ✓ New player races
- ✓ Good high-level content
- ✗ Buggy quests
- ✗ Limited appeal to casual players
- ✗ Not as comprehensive as *Shrouded Isles*

# 78

**For average players, Atlantis is best left undiscovered**



# WIDEN YOUR HORIZONS

## BLITZKRIEG BURNING HORIZON

The Blitzkrieg continues  
- relive the greatest battles  
in history. With new units,  
vehicles, upgrades and locations.



The original Blitzkrieg  
- strike fast and hard  
to crush the enemy.







Fly my pretty, fly!

# EVERQUEST: GATES OF DISCORD

■ \$29.99 | Pub: Ubisoft | Dev: Sony Online Entertainment | ETA: Out Now | [www.gatesofdiscord.com](http://www.gatesofdiscord.com)

**REQUIRES** PIII 400, 256MB RAM, 32MB video card and a full version of *EverQuest*  
**DESIRES** PIII or greater and 512MB RAM

**As *EverQuest II* limbers up for launch, Max Donnelly ventures into yet another expansion for the original**

**THE TIME** has come to pick up your sword, rapier, mace, staff or rod – and don't forget your highest-grade armour. Why, I hear you cry? Because it's time to slog through another session of the all-conquering *EverQuest*. But be warned: this latest add-on is not for the faint-hearted.

*Gates Of Discord* is Sony Online's eighth expansion to its lucrative property, as it aims to prove once and for all that it's not going to abandon its loyal fanbase as it gears up to launch *EverQuest II*.

The storyline ties into the continuing adventures of *Lost Dungeons Of Norrath's* Wayfarers Brotherhood and the discovery of Taelosia, yet another lost continent that a few (Norrathian) cartographers

must have been too wasted to notice. It also brings to the table the Berserker – the first new class we've seen since the Beastlord graced the *Shadows Of Luclin* pack – as well as 20 new zones (ten normal and ten instanced, but not random), plus a batch of alternative advancement skills.

## IN WITH THE NEW

What else? Well, *Gates* also introduces new experience tracks, especially good if you took advantage of the leadership tools that *LDON* introduced. There's also a tribute system that'll help liquidate that bloodstained tunic and rubicite armour you've been hoarding in your crowded vault for five years into 'tribute buffs'. A bunch of new spells and disciplines for all classes are here too, as well as an entirely new brand of stress-related headache. The latter is particularly aimed at anyone who thrives on getting destroyed by something really big that they

didn't see coming – and wouldn't have been able to handle even if they had.

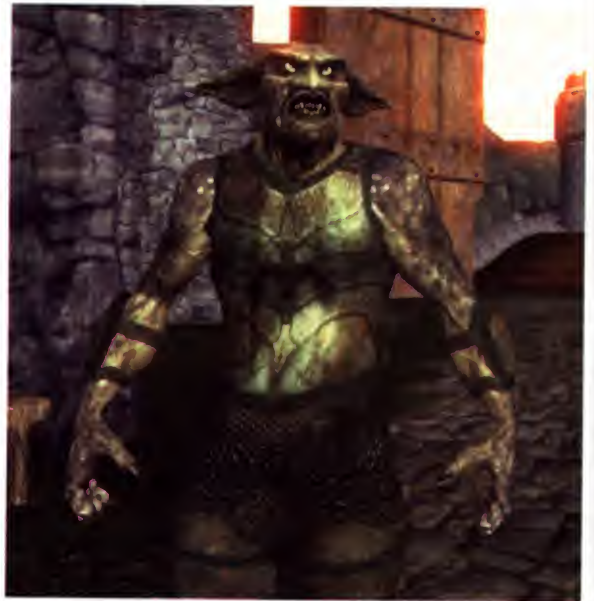
The key thing to point out is that *Gates Of Discord* is not for beginners. It's tailored to players who have eight level 65 characters on at least 14 servers (OK, nine or ten maybe). What's more, you must also be adept at working



**"Ask yourself: 'How many times do I want to die today?' Only the insane need apply"**



Will you look at the wheel on that.



Lipstick and stockings: nice combo.

under well-orchestrated group dynamics. As always, playing solo is not an option.

Unlike *Planes Of Power* and *LDON*, *Gates* does not have something for everyone. Back are the days of dangerous travel and nasty, expensive corpse recoveries. All of the streamlining that took the frustration out of *EQ* seems to have been replaced by complicated, precision requirements that only the truly elite can (or care to) handle – and only the truly daft can enjoy.

## HELLO MY PRETTY

It's not all hard work, though, and the top-notch feature here is the area design. The zones are absolutely stunning, with a palette of rich colours and textures, dramatic architecture, towering temples and other structures including fabulously lit corridors and very effective monster models. The Berserker class is fun to play too, but it's also similar to the other melee

classes (if Warriors could sneer at them, they would). And no accommodation has been made for them in the new zones, but perhaps Sony didn't expect to see any level 65 Berserkers around just yet. However, as you read this, we can confirm there are plenty of level 65 Berserkers who've purchased the game and thrived.

If you haven't bought *Gates* yet, look into the mirror and ask yourself: "How many times do I want to die today?" Seriously, only the insane need apply. **EQ2**

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Lush high-res graphics
- ✓ Serious high-level challenge
- ✗ Reintroduces tedium
- ✗ A waste for characters under 65

# 68

**The truly dedicated may thrive. Everyone else will wince**

## INPERSPECTIVE

### EVERQUEST: LOST DUNGEONS OF NORRATH

Reviewed Issue 138, Score 80%  
Private dungeons and far more content for mid-level players.

### DARK AGE OF CAMELOT: TRIALS OF ATLANTIS

Reviewed Issue 142, Score 78%  
Reviewed in this issue: same story, same problems.



# TURN YOUR MOBILE ON!

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Treat your mobile to the most wanted polyphonic tunes for just 50p. We will send you 2 fantastic new tunes each week, simply follow the instructions below.

TEXT **SUB**  
FOLLOWED BY A SPACE  
THEN **MUSIC**  
SEND TO **80010**  
EG: SEND SUB MUSIC TO 80010

**SEXY & COOL PICTURES**

Fancy new sexy, hot babes and fantastic cool pics for a mere 50p each? Follow the instructions below and we will send 2 new pics to you each week!

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FOLLOWED BY A SPACE  
THEN **SEXY**  
SEND TO **80010**  
EG: SEND SUB SEXY TO 80010

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And we ain't talking mud and stuff!! Twice a week you will be sent X-rated pics direct to your mobile for just 50p each.

TEXT **SUB** FOLLOWED BY A SPACE  
THEN **OVER18**  
SEND TO **69011**  
EG: SEND SUB OVER18 TO 69011

**OVER 18 ONLY!**

**LADS & LASSES GET THE LATEST RUDE 50P TXT JOKES**

Get the freshest, rudest, funniest jokes sent to your mobile for just 50p.

TEXT **JOKES** FOLLOWED BY A SPACE  
THEN **BOYS OR GIRLS**  
SEND TO **80010**  
EG: SEND JOKES BOYS OR JOKES GIRLS TO 80010

**SEXY!**

**JORDAN** CODE: 99100

**NICE BUNS!** CODE: 99083

**JO GUEST** CODE: 99051

**PATRIOTIC** CODE: 99021

**JO GUEST** CODE: 99025

**PIERCED** CODE: 99068

**MELINDA MESSENGER** CODE: 99022

**CROUCHED** CODE: 99018

**UNDRESSING** CODE: 99019

**TAN LINES** CODE: 99027

**TURNED ON!** CODE: 99102

**BAZOOKASI** CODE: 99012

**SUSPENDERS** CODE: 99101

**SAM FOX** CODE: 99104

**BEACH BABE** CODE: 99105

**DELICIOUS!** CODE: 99005

**GIRL ON RACE TRACK** CODE: 99080

**CLEAVAGE** CODE: 99050

**I WANT YOU** CODE: 99092

**FOXY LADY** CODE: 99093

**BAUCY!** CODE: 99097

**CATHY LLOYD** CODE: 99107

**BRITNEY** CODE: 99098

**SUSPENDERS** CODE: 99108

**COOL!**

**POUNCE STAR** CODE: 99037

**SPINN DONOR** CODE: 99071

**CHILL OUT** CODE: 99029

**SUPER MAN** CODE: 99072

**HORNEY DEVIL** CODE: 99052

**BEAR NECESSITIES** CODE: 99078

**CHELSEA** CODE: 99131

**2 FAST 2 FURIOUS** CODE: 99085

**BAT PHONE** CODE: 99062

**MANHATTAN CREST** CODE: 99044

**EYE CONTACT** CODE: 99120

**STARSKY & HUTCH** CODE: 99079

**KISS MY** CODE: 99099

**BOBBY FACE** CODE: 99103

**SNOWBOARDER** CODE: 99108

**JOHNNY** CODE: 99002

**PLAYMATE** CODE: 99070

**SPANK!** CODE: 99081

**MUHAMMAD ALI** CODE: 99045

**RACHEL STEVENS** CODE: 99043

**SURFER** CODE: 99042

**LAMBORGHINI** CODE: 99082

**BUSH CUTTER!** CODE: 99074

**CHILLIN' KERMIT** CODE: 99038

**CRASH** CODE: 99023

**EMINEM** CODE: 99041

**LEAP OF FAITH** CODE: 99084

**DIABLO** CODE: 99127

**IT'S A CRACKER!** CODE: 99128

**JOJO MARSH** CODE: 99124

**DOGGY KISS** CODE: 99133

**MAGIC DOOR** CODE: 99132

**MAGIC NUMBER** CODE: 99080

TEXT **PICS4** FOLLOWED BY A SPACE  
THEN THE 5 DIGIT **CODE** SEND TO **80010**  
EG: SEND PICS4 99038 TO 80010

## SERIOUSLY COOL POLYPHONIC TUNES!

TOP POP		TV AND FILMS		MORE TV AND FILMS	
Janet Minogue - I Begin To Wonder	51001	Mission Impossible	51019	Rhubarb & Custard	52041
Junior Senior - Move Your Feet	51002	Alf Wolf	52001	The X Files	52043
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ATB - 9pm Till I Come	51010	Scoby-Doo	52009		
Eminem - The Real Slim Shady	51012	Austin Powers	52011		
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999Devil	51016	YMCA	52016		
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# AIRBUCCANEERS (BETA 3)



SIZE 114MB **REQUIRES** Full version of UT2003  
[ludocraft.oulu.fi/airbuccaneers](http://ludocraft.oulu.fi/airbuccaneers)

**TOTAL CONVERSION**

## Tony Lamb gets an inflated opinion

**BALLOONS** don't usually conjure up the usual FPS images of blood, guts and mayhem, but *AirBuccaneers* straps guns to balloons, fiddles their physics and drops the whole crazy ensemble into the middle of a deathmatch environment – and it works too. The Montgolfier brothers are probably spinning in their graves.

Historically, balloons were used as spotting platforms in both world wars and the Germans employed a Zeppelin to bomb England in WWI. So far, though, this has to be the only balloon-related mod around.

It's intriguing, needing you to have a good grasp of 3D spatial awareness if you want to successfully pilot the balloons. Turbulence and air currents make manoeuvring difficult (as does having other players shooting at you), and you'll need to practise before you succeed at the treasure hunt game type

(destroying enemy balloons releases floating treasure for collection), or manage the domination variant.

Player and balloon models are equally quirky. They're very individual and add to the idiosyncratic, almost unworldly atmosphere. The cannons, air-mines and other weapons are suitably potent too, although their use also needs some skill and practise.

At this stage, *AirBuccaneers* servers are rare, with only a couple available. However, LAN gaming works well and single-player games are an option too, although the bots can't fly the balloons, which is a shame. You can, however, use them as crew members, but they can only load or fire the cannons, not aim them. Novel mod ideas don't always pay off, but *AirBuccaneers* rises high enough to make the grade.

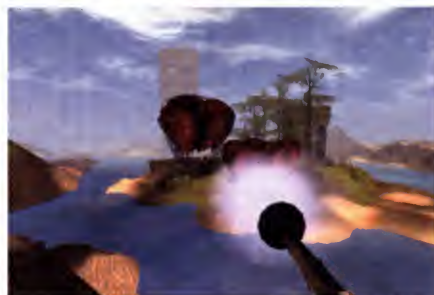
**PCZONE  
VERDICT**

**79**

**Novelty incarnate**



Look closely and you can spot Richard Branson.



They're getting away. Slowly.



"There's something on your face..."

# INFILTRATION V2.9

SIZE 459MB **REQUIRES** Full version of Unreal Tournament (patched to v436)  
[infiltration.sentrystudios.net](http://infiltration.sentrystudios.net)

**TOTAL CONVERSION**

## It's been a long wait, but Tony Lamb reckons it was worth it

**FEW MODS** leave me with a big grin on my face, but *Infiltration* has always been one of them. It's two years since it last graced these pages and in that time it's more than trebled in

size – but the time and weight gain have been put to good use, as this v2.9 keeps *Infiltration* right up there with the best.

From its detailed website through to its slavish attention to

detail and homage to realism, this is a top class mod, proving that the now ageing *UT* is still more than capable of providing some cracking entertainment.

Taking its cues from *Counter-Strike*, *Infiltration* builds on the familiar (and now chillingly topical) terrorist vs counter-terrorist genre, refining and perfecting the style even further. A huge amount of effort has gone into the mod and what the *UT* engine might lack in terms of sheer oomph nowadays, *Infiltration* makes up for with great maps, attention-grabbing gameplay, realistic sounds, authentic weapons handling, classy models and a host of other treats and tricks. The weapon loadouts read like an armourer's wet dream and the



immersive, mission-based environment is a gem.

This isn't an easy mod to play and be good at. It demands time and effort to master the various weapons and varied maps, but *Infiltration* will amply reward you with many hours of enjoyment. Online support for *UT* is thinning out, but there are still servers around. A LAN game is fab and bots are well supported too.

**PCZONE  
VERDICT**

**92**

**Realism par excellence**



Bang bang. You're dead.



# TRUE COMBAT V1.1

SIZE 144MB **REQUIRES** Full version of Quake III  
[www.planetquake.com/q3t](http://www.planetquake.com/q3t)

**TOTAL CONVERSION**



ONLY ONE ZONE



**Tony Lamb fights the very good fight indeed**

**TRUE COMBAT** is another veteran that's stood the test of time, evolving to become one of the best *QIII* mods around and earning a spot on every fan's must-have list. Few additions can claim to have been as

persistently impressive and v1.1 adds yet more top class maps and improved server stability to this title.

This is a team-based, tactics-driven realism mod, but not quite as fanatically so as *Infiltration*.

Thus, it's slightly more approachable if you want realistic weapons and environments but aren't so keen on checking your M16 for the right number of rivets. *Quake III* works brilliantly as a host

environment too, its in-built hardcore style suited to the intense shootouts that *True Combat* can offer.

The two teams are neatly skinned, with some brilliantly worked camo outfits. Weapons are lovingly detailed and awesome in effect too. The iron-sights aiming method also seen in *Infiltration* removes the usual FPS crosshairs, which means you need to bring a weapon up and aim in order to shoot. The selection, also similar to *Infiltration*, will be instantly recognisable if you're a Tom Clancy fan or SAS operative: the Desert Eagle, MP5, AK47, Benelli and M4 are joined by a couple of rarer sniper rifles. The list isn't massive, but they're well modelled and

better implemented than most.

Maps are well crafted too, with a good variety of environments well suited to the CTF, Team Deathmatch and Mission game types. The *True Combat* website is another top class effort, full of information and gameplay details – ignore it at your peril.

**PCZONE VERDICT** **89**  
**Realism modding doesn't get much better**



The nightclub was unusually empty...



Back of the head!

# SCIENCE & INDUSTRY V0.97B

SIZE 77MB **REQUIRES** Full version of Half-Life  
[www.si-central.com](http://www.si-central.com)

**TOTAL CONVERSION**



**Who said science was boring? Not Tony Lamb**



"I said half an hour for lunch, godammit!"



Even the commute to work is deadly.



One bullet and *Half-Life 2* dies.



So much for the pension plan.

**THIS MOD** is a gem. It's been two years since the last big update, but this venerable teamplay add-on has had a major revamp, bringing it up to date with a list of changes that would make many a new mod blush – let alone one now five years old. A dedicated team kept the mod alive and now fans and

newbies alike are in for a treat with the new maps, models and gameplay tweaks.

The basic premise remains the same – two high-tech corporations, teams of scientists developing weapons and being kidnapped, then (hopefully) being rescued. The company with the most scientists can develop

fastest and so will probably win. It's a variant on the Capture The Flag idea and although the scientists will run away, they don't move too fast and catching them (by smacking them over the head with a briefcase and carrying them back to your base) is more about dodging bullets than anything else. Once there, a

voting scheme means you can decide the scientist's focus and this can be tactically important – better armour or bionic implants could be more useful than a new weapon, for example. *S&I* needs thought as well as quick reflexes.

*S&I* offers plenty of well designed new maps, increased weapon power and a host of

neat features. Its derivation is unmistakably *Half-Life* and *S&I* captures the industrial/military atmosphere perfectly. We await a *Half-Life 2* version...

**PCZONE VERDICT** **88**  
**Science wins again**



# COMMUNITY CHEST



## CIVILIZATION III

**Daniel Emery selects the choicest mod morsels for the global strategy legend...**

Sid Meier's *Civilization* is the longest-running game franchise ever. Almost everyone has a copy sitting on a shelf somewhere, and you may well want to dust yours off as we have a huge collection of mods and add-ons to give it a new lease of life.

It's been nearly 14 years since the original came out. Apart from making you feel old, it just goes to show how good the game was. It's got a following measured in the thousands and with the last incarnation only 18 months old, there's a steady stream of new gamers discovering *Civ III* for the first time...



### WARHAMMER CIVILIZATION (MOD)

[www.civ3files.com/Embryodead](http://www.civ3files.com/Embryodead)

In this mod, the old game's been turned on its head and replaced with ancient races such as elves and dwarfs, rapidly expanding human kingdoms and dark invaders such as undead hordes. You don't even need to be a *Warhammer* fan to enjoy it – although it helps.



### CIVILIZATION FANATICS (FANSITE)

[www.civfanatics.com](http://www.civfanatics.com)

This site has everything – mods, add-ons, graphic updates, new sounds, tutorials, patches and updates. Not only that, but you can find something for every version of *Civilization* – even the 14-year-old original. Now, if only they'd do away with the continual pop-up screens...



### TOLKIEN'S MIDDLE-EARTH (MOD)

[www.darkelf.ca](http://www.darkelf.ca)

This mod pack offers a total conversion of *Civ III* to a Tolkien-esque style game: all the units, characters, events and buildings are straight from *Lord Of The Rings*. There's also further granularity on the tech tree, wonders and other improvements that'll have wannabe hobbits drooling.



### CTP MAPS (MAPS)

[ctpmaps.apolyton.net](http://ctpmaps.apolyton.net)

As the name implies, this site is a collection of maps for *Civilization: Call To Power*. The majority are converted *Civ II* maps specific to real-world locations found on Earth – such as Britain, Europe and America – although they do have a few new-world maps too such as Planet X.



### CIV 3 STAR WARS (MOD)

[www.strategyplanet.com/civilization/starwars](http://www.strategyplanet.com/civilization/starwars)

Ignoring obvious copyright infringements, this is a novel approach to the *Civ* game. Gone are all the old nations, replaced by the different races from *Star Wars*, and all the buildings, technology and music have been modified to reflect the *Star Wars* universe. Yeah, it's geeky – but so what?



### APOLYTON (FANSITE)

[apolyton.net/civ3](http://apolyton.net/civ3)

This is another one of those 'everything under one roof' websites full of all things *Civ*: from late-breaking news and interactive discussions through to almost every download you could want. There's also a matchmaking service if you're on the hunt for some head-to-head or play-by-email action.



### DEVELOPER MODS (MODS)

[www.civ3.com/mods.cfm](http://www.civ3.com/mods.cfm)

Firaxis, the team behind *Civilization III*, has been putting together some mods in its spare time – and they're rather good. There's also a handy edit utility for tweaking both standard and modified save game files. Rob Cheng's *Age Of Piracy* mod is one of the more novel we've seen. Enjoy.



### DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE (MOD)

[civ3.bernskov.com](http://civ3.bernskov.com)

The ultimate mod for realism. Everything's been expanded to make the simulated colonisation of Earth more in keeping with real events. There's a great map, loads of resources and limitations on what you can do with your units. But the name? Your guess is as good as ours...



# STEVE HILL'S NEVERQUEST

Steve Hill discovers a sick, sick world in *There*



**"IT'S NOT** a game and you can't die. The only thing you can do is have FUN!" Where? *There*. Not there. *There*. A living breathing community, *There* is a place where citizens of the world can exist without boundaries or prejudices. Or as online editor Prezzer succinctly puts it: "One of those MOR American 'virtual world' pieces of crap in which people build communities with friends rather than pretend to be orcs and pixies and that."

Either way, I'm heading into *There* to join the burgeoning demographic of online menopausal women. Living up to my prejudices, immediately after landing in the fluffy world of *There*, a young strumpet by the name of Vixxen makes my acquaintance, and even gives me a welcome mug of cocoa. Other gifts soon start flying in, and within minutes I've been furnished with a tank top, some shorts and a hover-bike. People are almost too friendly, and it's

slightly cloying, much like the preamble to a swingers party (a notion that eventually proves remarkably prescient). It's also a little cynical, as I later discover that so-called mentors are on a commission for helping out newbies.

## MILF OR FILTH?

Essentially a glorified mall where people hang out to chat and shop (hence the female interest), there are also scheduled activities such as quiz nights, lotteries, card schools and circle jerks. One event piques my interest though, and so, armed with my satin-pink dream machine, I head for the hover-bike races at Islandview Speedway.

A reasonable crowd has gathered, and LadyInRed sparks up a conversation. With her spiky hair, hot pants and low-cut top, she's certainly pleasing on the eye and I instigate some mild flirtation.

This is abruptly truncated when

I click on her real-life profile to discover that she's a 50+ grandmother living on a goat farm in Texas.

The hover race itself is a travesty of a farce and I quit without having completed a lap. Bidding a brief farewell, I leave LadyInRed and the rest of the bikers, somewhat perturbed at the thought of a grandmother living out her fantasies by dressing like a prostitute and hanging out with Hell's Angels.

## THERE THERE MY DEAR

Mildly depressed, I opt for some retail therapy. I try on a dark green v-neck shirt (thanks to the two-minute free trial) and decide to keep it, splashing out 2,799 Therebucks, over half of my budget. Sod it, you can't take it with you.

Mildly buoyed by my consumer purchase, I head back to the main meeting area where newly-arrived citizens are milling about, shouting their virginity loud with their uniform of white shirts and khaki pants. With an air of superiority, I slip on my new shirt to affirm my veteran status, as confirmed when I receive an email with the message: "Congratulations, you're now a Casual Socializer!" That's a first.

Spotting Vixxen again, I warily click on her profile. She's been busy and has constructed a dedicated website replete with photographs. Casually flicking through, there are her wedding photos (boring), some snaps of her with an old boyfriend (a bit weird), a picture of her on a Gay Pride march with her friend Markus (fair enough) and finally a graphic shot of her wearing S&M gear with a bloke in eyeshadow grabbing her right tit. It's enough to make me spit out my virtual cocoa – which she gave me! – and I reel away in disgust, returning only to check if there are any more.

## BROWN WINGS

Despite its happy-clappy approach, it seems that the world of *There* is one big clusterfuck waiting to happen. Further evidence is offered when I check out KoffeKandy and am introduced to a selection of her poetry. Essentially an advert for her sexual wares, she describes herself as a "mahogany tight African Queen" and includes the immortal couplet: "Head high, spine strong and straight, shoulders back, lips just ready

to devastate. Full succulent breasts with a matching "bleep". Sounds good to me.

By now settled into a joyless routine of clicking on any woman's profile in search of some semblance of humanity (or pictures of a divorced Canadian MILF), it's a hit-and-miss affair. Jenna B is a mother of four, whereas blonde temptress little\_sweetie reveals nothing more than "im a striper at a bar", with her grasp of the English language possibly revealing why. There's clearly some gender-bending going on too, with Bonemouse boasting: "I'm a hot blonde chick with big knockers who likes to cyber!" – despite appearing as a male in her profile.

The final straw comes during a cursory stalking of TheMermaid2004, whose profile claims: "I enjoy horseback riding, hanging out with my friends and listening to music. Oh yeah, old guys and anyone else it may concern, please keep yourselves in check – I'm only 12!" Of course you are, mate. [X]

**"I'm heading into *There* to join the burgeoning demographic of online menopausal women"**



Hill on his pink dream machine. Watch him fly!



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# HARDWARE

ALL THE LATEST NEWS AND REVIEWS FROM THE WORLD OF PC HARDWARE

## HELP, I'M DROWNING



■ **HARDWARE EDITOR** Phil Wand

▲ By the time you read this, someone in the States will have a metallic grey Boxster S sitting on their driveway, courtesy of a sweepstake at Internet giant AOL. With just 18,000 miles on the clock, the 24-month-old Porsche is valued at over \$40,000 – an amount that's dwarfed by the \$1,000,000 its previous owner netted from sending out unsolicited email over the AOL network. Consider that spam costs nothing to send, and you soon realise that every dollar earned is pure profit.

With Microsoft, Yahoo! and Earthlink, AOL has become one of the more prominent anti-spam crusaders, regularly chasing off the people who abuse its network to deluge our mailboxes with a mountain of crap – an estimated 12.4 billion deliveries every day, or one for every sheep in Swansea. The flash motor in the sweepstake was plundered from a successful court case which AOL brought against a spam artist last year.

Spam now constitutes over 40 per cent of all email and costs businesses close to \$10bn each year, or about \$400 a second. It is perhaps the world's number one home nuisance, leading many people to distrust the Internet and revert to older and more trusted forms of communication. With so many spam rules, filters and blacklists, email is no longer guaranteed to arrive intact – a disturbing number of legitimate emails are snagged in traps and never reach their destination.

Of the 2,500 messages I receive each week, most are junk. And although I get shot of them as soon as they arrive, many people don't – other people's stupidity is why spammers can buy Porsche Boxsters. You can expect me to put a 'challenge/response' system in place very soon, where people who email me are emailed back with a request to resend their message; it's an easy way of ensuring that *someone* rather than *something* is responsible for the message. I'll let you know if it works.

# CEBIT CONDENSED

**CeBIT 2004 is the planet's largest computer trade expo. Here's the buzz, presented in a handy at-a-glance format...**

**CeBIT**  
HANNOVER - GERMANY  
18 - 24 MARCH 2004

**GERMANY IS** famous for many things, including beer, sausage and dodgy hairdos. In March, however, it also laid claim to showcasing the best of new computing technology, with Hannover hosting 2004's CeBIT computer trade show. Thousands of curious punters from around the globe turned up at the show, and here's what they were treated to.

Neither NVIDIA nor ATI was showcasing its next-gen graphics cards, but you can expect a new slew of GeForce and Radeon cards in the first two weeks of May. ATI says it expects half of all motherboards to ship with a 16x PCI Express video slot by the end of this year. GeForce PCX cards were in abundance, but these are based on current NV3x technology bridged to a PCI Express interface and thus not especially exciting. By the time you read this, you should be able to buy one, although NVIDIA partners are complaining about the cost of building them. S3 Graphics, once a market leader, was talking up its new GammaChrome range of video processing chips too, due in June – one to watch.

What else? Well, AMD was non-committal about moving from current single-threaded thinking towards a Hyper-Threading equivalent, but a dual-core CPU is likely, which will act much like a dual-processor would. Socket 939, the basis for all future Athlon 64 chips, is on cue for late April. Socket 940 will be around for some time yet, but Socket 754 may well be dead by Christmas. Intel wasn't displaying them, but Grantsdale and Alderwood samples are available to board manufacturers. Alderwood is the company's first PCI Express board, supporting Socket 775 chips and DDR2-533 memory, plus integrated network, graphics, audio, RAID and support for 64-bit extensions due in Pentium 4s. It's likely that Grantsdale will offer

**“Zalman was showing off its noiseless case – but at £800, your wallet may cry”**

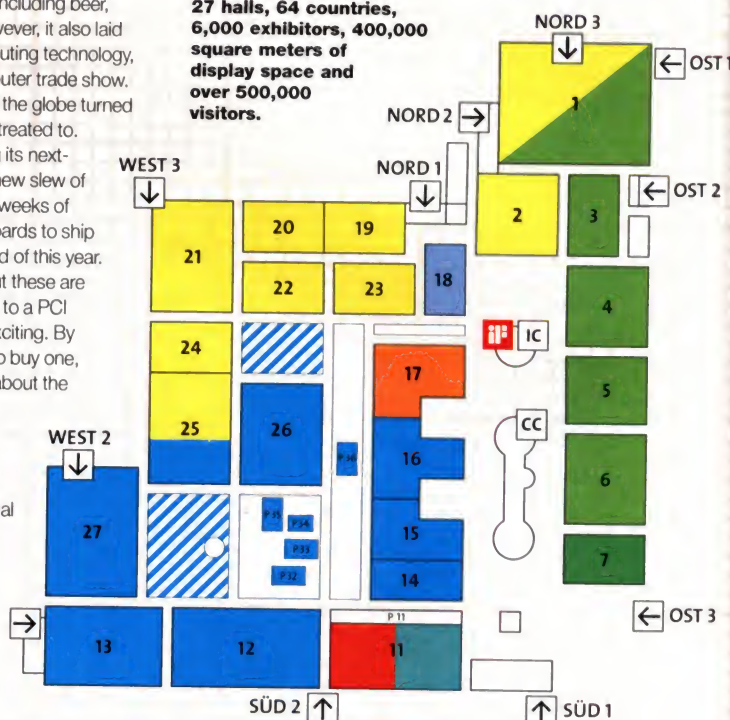
DDR and DDR2 support, but in separate product lines. Rumours abound that next year's monster, Tejas, is already undergoing testing, its release brought forward to fight back against AMD.

### MATRIX RELOADED

ASUS announced the DigiMatrix II and Gigabyte was showing off its HA. Both are rack-sized, LAN-connected, super-quiet mediacentre PCs which do everything bar making the tea: CD and MP3 player, USB connectivity, a tuner, recording and playback facilities, HDTV output and radio – you name it. If you'd rather build one yourself, you could buy one of the handsome Cavalier ATX chassis from Cooler Master.

And talking of cooling, Overclockers will be delighted to hear that OCZ has announced PC5000 products, 600MHz DDR SDRAM modules, and that many more watercooling solutions

**27 halls, 64 countries, 6,000 exhibitors, 400,000 square meters of display space and over 500,000 visitors.**



will soon be available. With talk of 650MHz DDR available soon, cooling will be more important than ever. And if you're worried about heat, Zalman was showing off its noiseless TNN500A case. At £800 though, it may make your wallet gently weep.

Finally at CeBIT, Shuttle was exhibiting a range of small form factor PCs, including new models suiting 64-bit AMD chips, mainly pitched at gamers. It's recently released a TFT screen to partner its machines, but with a 25ms response time, you might want to look elsewhere for your flat panel. There were no CRT products on display, confirming the world is turning flat. But as this expo confirmed, the technology market is anything but.

### LINKS

**WANT TO KNOW MORE? LOOK HERE...**

**NVIDIA Corporation** [www.nvidia.com](http://www.nvidia.com)  
**ATI Technologies Inc** [www.ati.com](http://www.ati.com)  
**S3 Graphics Inc** [www.s3graphics.com](http://www.s3graphics.com)  
**Intel Corporation** [www.intel.com](http://www.intel.com)  
**Advanced Micro Devices Inc** [www.amd.com](http://www.amd.com)  
**ASUSTeK Computer** [www.asus.com](http://www.asus.com)  
**Gigabyte Technology** [www.gigabyte.com.tw](http://www.gigabyte.com.tw)  
**Micro-Star International** [www.msicomputer.com](http://www.msicomputer.com)  
**Cooler Master** [www.coolermaster.com](http://www.coolermaster.com)  
**OCZ Technology** [www.ocztechnology.com](http://www.ocztechnology.com)  
**Zalman Tech** [www.zalman.co.kr](http://www.zalman.co.kr)  
**Shuttle Inc** [www.shuttle.com](http://www.shuttle.com)





## REVIEWS

The card from Atlantis



## REVIEWS

A fruity and fresh flat screen



## DEAR WANDY

Got a problem? Share it with us



## BUYER'S GUIDE

Make a fresh start here

# GAMESHADOW

### Now you can go patching without searching

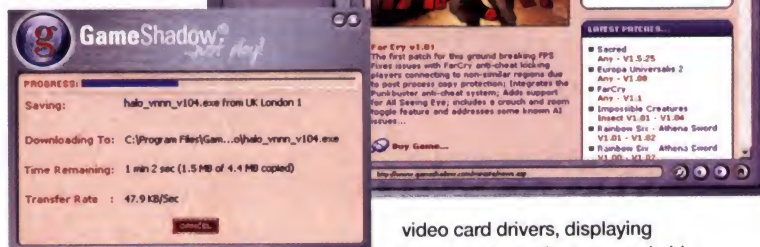
WHEN YOU signed up to broadband, you'll have seen all the waffle about how your DSL or Cable connection would be ten times faster than a modem, and as activation day approached you dreamt of jet-propelled progress bars and your telephone line glowing from the speed at which files were arriving. But now you've got it, is that really what it's like?

Trouble is, games have grown rather unwieldy (remember the days of installing *Doom* from four floppy disks?), and the updates for them are ridiculously overweight – the last *Desert Combat* update was 600MB. Bandwidth costs money, and because nobody wants to provide a large number of huge files to an enormous number of people, all the most popular downloads have been tucked away behind confirmation screens, login pages and queuing systems, and are now the trickiest to track down. In addition, with so many cheats and exploits doing the rounds, game updates come thick and fast – *Far Cry* was patched within a week of its release.

## CAST A SHADOW

This means that it's getting increasingly hard to keep your games up to date and if you lag behind with your patching, you

GameShadow knows what games and what drivers you have on your machine, and keeps you abreast of what patches are available.



miss out on important bug fixes and won't be able to play online – game servers demand that everyone uses the most up-to-date protocol. Luckily, there's an answer close at hand.

GameShadow is like an all-knowing butler. It has a catalogue of all the latest versions tucked in an inside pocket – close to 1,000 at last count – and when you sign up, you can ask it to compare what you've got with what you should have. Once GameShadow identifies a missing patch (and it even works with

video card drivers, displaying benchmarks against new and old versions), a direct download location on a dedicated server is presented to you. Click. Download. That's it.

If you buy as little as four or five games a year, or if you just want to be kept abreast of driver developments and what they mean to your PC, GameShadow makes a lot of sense. The service is subscription-based and costs £9.95 per year, or about tuppence daily. If you've ever been frustrated by the availability of key updates and upgrades, it's a tiny price to pay. [www.gameshadow.com](http://www.gameshadow.com)

## THE DOWNLOAD SAGA

More servers, more capacity, more bandwidth – but downloading gets harder every day. Recognise the following scenario?

Click [here](#) for the files section. Click [here](#) to download. [Agree](#) to terms and conditions. [Skip](#) this ad. Select a [mirror](#). No, not [that](#) one. [This](#) one. Click to install our [spyware download client](#). You must

install our [spyware download client](#). Sod you then. Select [another mirror](#). Register to download. Enter your name, address, and when your home contents insurance is up for renewal. Click [here](#) to login. Click

to [download](#). [Agree](#) to a huge page of text that nobody in their right mind would agree to. Your file is now queuing for the download queue. Please visit our [sponsor](#). Press for [custard](#).

## TIME TO SPARKLE

If you want a sparkling graphics card, read on...

Last month, you may remember reading about the Sparkle GeForce 5800 XT. With a score of 90 per cent, there's every chance you'd want to lift the phone, call Sparkle and ask where you can buy one. Trouble is, the number we printed didn't let you do that, and the website directs you to the Taiwanese headquarters. Sparkle's distributor is Nexus Technology, on 0191 482 6656. The recommended website you should visit to buy a Sparkle card is [www.dcs-online.biz](http://www.dcs-online.biz). And since the review, the price has dropped yet further to just £129. A lot of cash for not a lot of money.

# DRIVER WATCH



### Need a patch? Take a look to see if you're behind the times

## MOTHERBOARD

MANUFACTURER	NAME	DESC	RELEASED	SIZE	WEB
Intel	Chipset Software Installation Utility	5.1.1.1002	12-Dec-03	1.4MB	<a href="http://support.intel.com">support.intel.com</a>
NVIDIA	Forceware	3.13	03-Nov-03	12.9MB	<a href="http://www.nvidia.com">www.nvidia.com</a>
VIA	Hyperion 4in1	4.51	02-Dec-03	1.4MB	<a href="http://www.viaarena.com">www.viaarena.com</a>
VIA	Hyperion Pro 64-bit	0.96 Beta	04-Feb-04	2.25MB	<a href="http://www.viaarena.com">www.viaarena.com</a>

## GRAPHICS

MANUFACTURER	NAME	DESC	RELEASED	SIZE	WEB
ATI	Display, Control Panel, WDM	CATALYST 4.3	10-Mar-04	24.3MB	<a href="http://www.ati.com">www.ati.com</a> <b>new</b>
NVIDIA	Forceware	56.64	15-Mar-03	10.2MB	<a href="http://www.nvidia.com">www.nvidia.com</a> <b>new</b>

## SOUND

MANUFACTURER	NAME	DESC	RELEASED	SIZE	WEB
Creative	EAX 4.0 ADV HD Driver Update	1-84-40	29-Mar-03	6.5MB	<a href="http://uk.europe.creative.com">uk.europe.creative.com</a>
M-Audio	Revolution	5.10.00.0052	06-Oct-03	10.1MB	<a href="http://m-audio.com">m-audio.com</a>

## SNIPPETS

### BROADBAND POWER

The world's first commercial Broadband over Power Line (BPL) service is being offered to 4,000 homes along 500 miles of Central Virginia Electric lines in Nelson County, Virginia, USA. Users in the pilot scheme will be offered unlimited, always-on Internet access at 256kbps at a cost of \$30 a month. A device known as a BPL-Plug fits into any power socket and transmits the data from the supply through an ethernet connector. Fifteen other power companies throughout the US are investigating BPL and, if successful, UK firms are sure to follow suit. [www.forvec.com](http://www.forvec.com)



### WI-DD

ASUS is aiming to launch a wireless hard drive within the next few months, despite the market resisting similar products from the likes of Sony and Toshiba. A wire-free HDD could be used for backup purposes, sucking vital data away from one room and blowing it into another, or simply as a means of making file transportation even easier than before. Want to share those 600 *Dr Who* episodes with your nerdy neighbour? Don't fancy waiting for that 700MB *Desert Combat* patch to download round your mate's place? Simply pick your hard drive up and carry it with you. [www.asus.com](http://www.asus.com)

### RADIO GAGA

Creative is branching out again. Described as 'the best-sounding table radio ever' by *Home Theatre* magazine (the fact there's a 'table radio' category is impressive in itself), and looking like a direct rival to Bose's Wave systems, the Soundworks Radio CD 740 is billed as the ultimate tabletop solution – and at £199.99 it had better be. The



unit includes an AM/FM radio with up to 24 presets and RDS, two-line digital readout, an MP3-capable CD player and alarms. The sound comes courtesy of two satellite speakers, a subwoofer and amplifiers. [europe.creative.com](http://europe.creative.com)



# 9800 PRO ATLANTIS 128MB

■ Price: £153 | Manufacturer: Sapphire Technology | Phone: 01793 423830 | [www.sapphiretech.com](http://www.sapphiretech.com)

If you thought the 5900 XT was unbeatable, think again

## GRAPHICS CARD

**EIGHT** months ago, the 128MB Radeon 9800 Pro was the best card on the shelf – a few frames ahead of the FX 5900 Ultra in benchmarks, not far

## SPECIFICATIONS

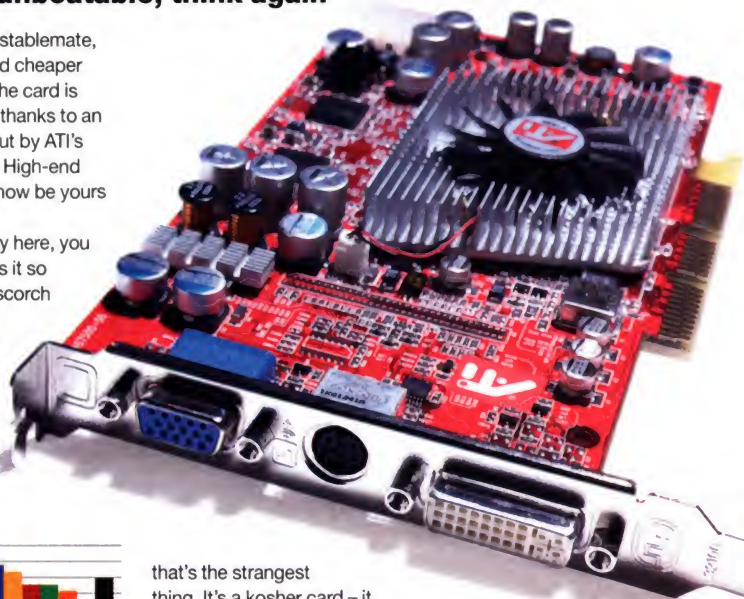
**HARDWARE** 128MB ATI Radeon 9800 Pro

**ANCILLARIES** 1 x VGA to DVI converter, S-video cable, composite cable, S-video to composite, power splitter

**BUNDLE** Tomb Raider: AOD, Power DVD XP 4.0, Redline utility, Installation CD

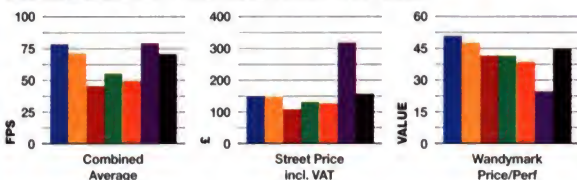
behind its 256MB stablemate, and around 50 quid cheaper than both. Today the card is even better value, thanks to an aggressive price cut by ATI's marketing people. High-end performance can now be yours for £150.

Something fishy here, you think? What makes it so cheap? Are there scorch marks around the power connector? Is it actually five calculators lashed together and dipped in red paint? Well,



Ultra is convincingly faster). The Radeon is such a corker at this price that unless you simply must have the fastest machine on your street, it's worth recommending over the higher priced 9800XT. The £200 you'd save would easily cover the cost of a processor upgrade and faster RAM, and when you look at things like that, why buy any other AGP video card?

## BENCHMARKS SAPPHIRE RADEON 9800 PRO 128MB



■ **SAPPHIRE RADEON 9800 PRO 128MB** ■ **SPARKLE GEFORCE 5900 XT 128MB**  
 ■ **GIGABYTE RADEON 9600 PRO 128MB** ■ **GAINWARD ULTRA/960 GS 128MB**  
 ■ **ASUS RADEON 9600XT 128MB** ■ **ASUS RADEON 9800XT 256MB**  
 ■ **CREATIVE BLASTER 5 FX5900 128MB**

The **COMBINED SCORE** is an average of a number of real-world gaming tests and bespoke benchmarking tools. The **WANDYMARK** is the combined average score divided by the price.

that's the strangest thing. It's a kosher card – it looks, smells, and goes like the real deal, because it is the real deal. There are no tyre marks on the box and no burning smell when you turn it on.

If the Canadians can continue to make money from the 9800 Pro, and ATI assures me there's a huge supply of product at this price, that little red logo is in an

enviable position. The rival GeForce is more expensive to produce, and NVIDIA can't afford to go making losses in such a high volume area (even if they could drop in a challenger to pick up where the 5900 XT left off, the 9800 Pro would beat it in the benchmarks – only the 5950

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Beats most cards on performance
- ✓ Trounces everything on value
- ✗ None really

# 95

**Faster than Shergar, cheaper than sherbet**

# NEXUS NXP-301

■ Price: £28 | Manufacturer: Vantec | Phone: N/A | [www.vantecusa.com](http://www.vantecusa.com)

Add cold cathode lighting and fan controls to your rig



## FAN & LIGHT CONTROLLER

**SLOTING** into any standard 5.25-inch drive bay, the NXP-301 combines three rotary fan speed controls with sound-activated lighting for nobbs. And a knob for the sound-activated lighting. Aimed at people new to the case modding scene, the package includes two blue cold cathode strips, each around 12 inches long, that when wired up

inside a windowed case make your PC look exactly like a gigantic bug zapper. If you're one of those people who always gets bitten at barbecues (i.e. you're fat and exhale a lot), take your machine along and leave it outside running something like *Far Cry*. This way, both the gnats and your fellow partygoers will be lured towards

it, leaving more chicken wings for you and ensuring the insect population is all porked out by the time it notices you heaving up into the rockery.

Joking aside, the NXP-301 has actually proven quite useful. The **ZONE** test machine has always run 'on the hot side', and with Vantec's Stealth and Tornado case fans partnering the

controller in the front and rear of the case, the air flow is now under precise fingertip control and the temperature follows suit.

The 1.2W Stealth fan, complete with the silhouette of a Lockheed F117A on the box, is ultra low power and virtually inaudible. By

comparison, the 9.1W Tornado transfers three times the volume of air – the effect on temperature is instant – but it sounds like the arse end of a Boeing. Without the speed control it would be impossible to live with. The NXP-301 can control up to three separate fans with a maximum loading of 18W per fan channel – the equivalent of 15 Stealth fans.

These days, most case manufacturers have a windowed model somewhere in their range, and if you're not too embarrassed by the thought of

cold cathode lights pulsing to the sound of Red Hot Chili Peppers (both are of the same age group), the NXP-301 is a well-constructed, clearly detailed entry ticket to modding. Personally, I'd opt for the model without lighting, not only because you get four fan channels but also because it's £11 cheaper.

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Straightforward installation and a decent manual
- ✓ Cathode strips and wiring are included
- ✗ Lighting options pure gimmickry
- ✗ Zalman rival more blingin'

# 78

**Instant kudos for budding case freaks**





**ALIENWARE**  
THE ULTIMATE GAMING MACHINE



**"The benchmarks speak for themselves - You want it!"**

- PC Zone UK, January 2004

## AURORA™ EXTREME OPTION

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- AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology
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Prices Excluding Shipping

ACCESSID: PC20604PR3

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- 1024MB Dual-Channel PC 3200 DDR SDRAM
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 Ultra 256MB with DVI & S-Video Out
- 240GB 7200RPM Serial ATA-150 RAID 0 Array with 16MB Cache
- Creative Sound Blaster® Audigy 2™ ZS 7.1 Advanced 24-bit Audio
- Intel® PRO/1000 CT Gigabit Ethernet Controller
- Black Plextor® 708A 8x DVD±R/RW Drive
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional
- AlienAutopsy: Automated Technical Support
- AlienCare: Advanced Gaming Technical Support including:  
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Prices Excluding Shipping

ACCESSID: PC20604PA3

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- 1024MB PC-3200 DDR SDRAM at 400MHz
- 15.4" WideSXGA+ TFT Active Matrix LCD
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- Sound Blaster® Pro Compatible 3D Audio
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- Infrared Wireless Remote Control
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- AlienAutopsy: Automated Technical Support
- AlienCare: Advanced Gaming Technical Support including:  
Lifetime Personalised Online Support Portal  
1 Year Toll-Free 24/7 Phone Support by Alienware Technicians  
1 Year Depot Service
- Optimised & Configured for High Performance

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Prices Excluding Shipping

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# NETEASYPHONE CLASSIC

■ Price: £49.99 | Manufacturer: Group 3 Technology Limited | Phone: N/A | [www.neteasypHONE.net](http://www.neteasypHONE.net)

**It's good to talk, but better if it's free**

## INTERNET PHONE

**PLUGGING** a phone into an Internet connection seems like such a strikingly obvious idea that it's a wonder nobody's done it before. It's been known for some time that copper wires can carry more than just sound and will also transport multiplayer games, pictures, emails, goat videos and music, all neatly sliced into data packets and delivered using Internet Protocol (IP) with some old-fashioned network magic.

The question is of course, why would you want to go the modem route? Simple: bills. Dial a long-distance number on a BT phone and you'll rack up call charges that exceed the price of petrol; have the same conversation over IP instead and your words travel on a free ticket anywhere in the world. But before you dash out and buy one of these money-savers, there are some limitations that need to be considered. And contrary to what I led you to believe at the start, it's not new or clever.

Years ago, I used to work for an American outfit which developed some of the first Voice-over-IP (VoIP) products. Now, although the modern-day equivalents may seem like a revolutionary concept, the idea behind them dates back a

decade. There's no disadvantage in this, I'm just boasting.

Okay, so we've found out that the NETeasYPHONE is built on old foundations. It also won't offer anything new to the droves of *Counter-Strike* 'veterans' whose squeaky schoolboy voices are carried across the ether every night, nor to anyone who uses third-party tools such as Roger Wilco or Game Voice.

## STAY ON THE LINE

No, what the NETeasYPHONE offers is the instant familiarity of a traditional base/handset combination together with plug-and-play over USB – it's something you could send to your mother without any risk

of her sending it back with a note saying: "Very nice dear, what does it do?" And while USB isn't quite as flexible as an ethernet connection in that you need to position the phone within a

couple of feet of a PC and leave the PC powered on, that's hardly a fair complaint. Many of us spend so long in front of our computers that the most logical place for a phone is alongside the monitor, and PCs prefer being left on anyway.

## HELLO? OPERATOR?

What lets the NETeasYPHONE down is its network requirements and the software shipped with it. Having mucked about endlessly in the sound control panel (the phone is basically a USB sound card, much like the MediaXtender from last issue) and having failed to make it see beyond my router, I was on the point of giving up. Closer inspection of the manual revealed that the built-in XP firewall must be shut down before you can make a call. ("Hello? Operator? There's a hacker in my computer.") It also won't work from behind a router.

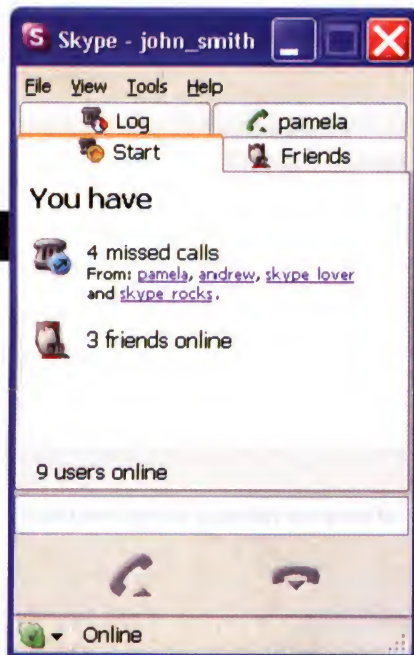
Otherwise it works fine. If you have a direct connection to the Internet – frankly, you're mad if you do – the clarity of signal is not perceptibly different from POTS (Plain Old Telephony

System). To make a call, either type the number or select it from a list, though somewhat peculiarly, the rubbery buttons on the base-set serve no purpose other than to make DTMF noises when you push them. To answer one, lift the phone when it rings and place it next to your ear. The cheaper standard phone does away with the base set and rings through your PC speakers rather than through the phone, but otherwise the end effect is the same: talking for free. [C2]

## INTRODUCING SKYPE

### THE P2P SOLUTION FROM THE FOLKS BEHIND KAZAA

Where NETeasYPHONE is manacled by old problems, Skype is from a next generation of Internet telephony products. It presents an interface not dissimilar from any instant message client and leaps all the obstacles that have so far prevented VoIP from being the runaway success it deserves to be. In short, end users will not have to reconfigure their gateways or deactivate security measures to make calls, and as well as replacing a centralised directory server with searchable P2P cleverness – KaZaA is the largest network of its type in the world and they know a thing or two about it – the product is currently in a free beta. Get yourself over to [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com) and download. It even works with NETeasYPHONE hardware.



Did anyone ring me? Never feel lonely again.

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Low cost
- ✓ Familiar appearance
- ✗ Really nasty software
- ✗ Aged networking and security issues

# 65

**Wait for the next version to come out, or use it with Skype**



# VG910S

■ Price: £522 | Manufacturer:  
ViewSonic | Phone: 01293 643900 |  
[www.viewsonic.co.uk](http://www.viewsonic.co.uk)

**A screen with some amazing specifications, but is it right for games?**

## LCD MONITOR

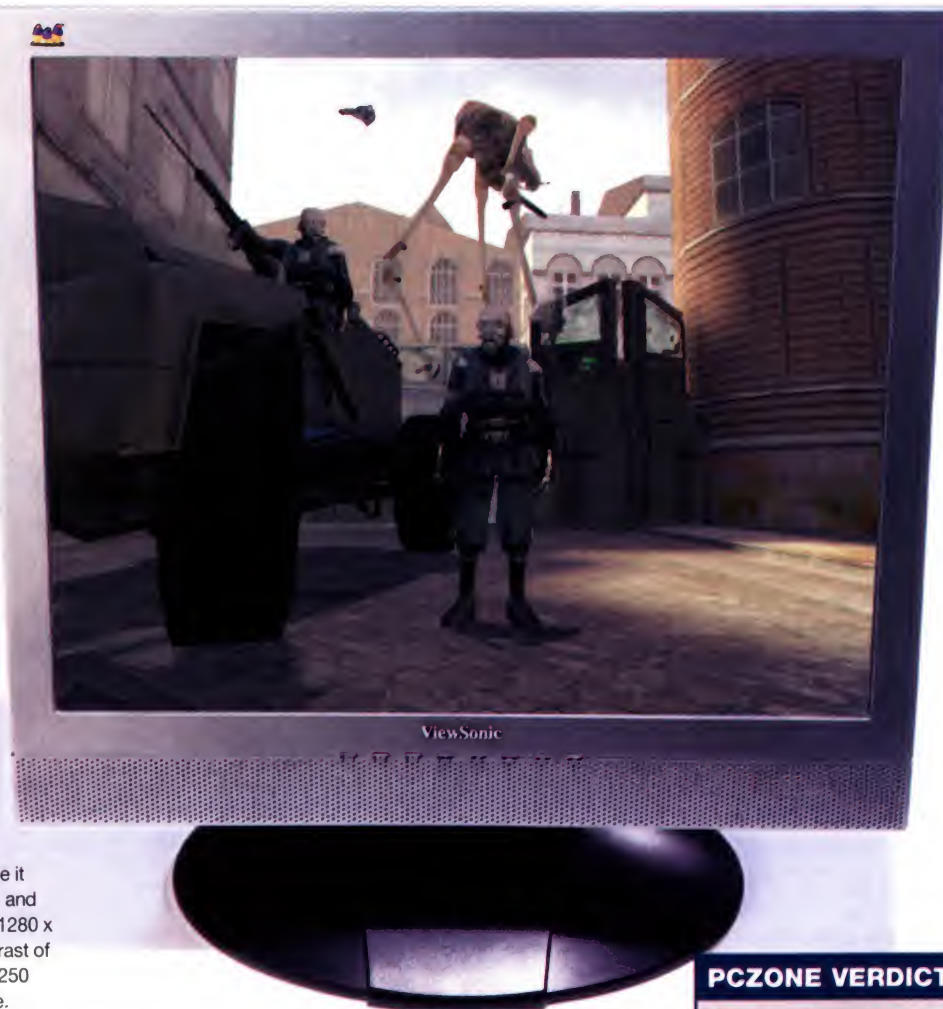
**A FEW** months back, I bought two Hitachi CML175SXW flat panels to use side by side like Elliot Carver in *Tomorrow Never Dies*. A multi-screen configuration is ideal for writing, coding, audio, video and graphics (you can put all the palettes on one screen while you edit on the other) as well as tracking nuclear missiles. I figured that two monitors on the same desk would lend me an air of villainous authority, and the integrated speakers in the CML175SXW model would mean I could do away with my existing Inspire P580s and have room to fill my desk with more cups of tea. Sadly, with just 1W of 'power' on offer, the tiny Hitachi speakers lacked definition and punch – the sound of grass growing outside my window was pretty deafening by comparison.

Eager to see if the ViewSonic's noise-making capabilities were any better, I plumbed in the VG910S's

integrated 3W (brace yourselves) speakers, joined a *Battlefield Vietnam* game and baby-budded my ears in anticipation. And, well, they're OK. Better than the CML175SXW equivalents, but still with less bass than a front row choirboy – best to think of them as the centre channel of an existing surround set-up.

## YOU LOOKING AT ME?

Looking at the screen itself, the ViewSonic has a 25ms response – the time it takes for a pixel to wink on and off – a native resolution of 1280 x 1024 pixels, a typical contrast of 600:1 and a brightness of 250 candelas per square metre. Anything above 400:1 is ideal for rich colouration; 600:1 is outstanding. In purely technical terms, it's more than a match for our award-winning Hitachi, presenting you with a sharp, vibrant image that maintains its clarity even in direct sunlight. Additionally, it features a larger viewing angle, and weighs a very trim 7.5kg. And of course, a 19-inch screen will always be a more attractive proposition than a 17-inch one.



The only trouble is, the VG910S doesn't quite cut it as a gaming screen. The speakers are a next-to-useless addition, delivering nothing in the way of clout and being best suited to people whose soundcards are largely dormant. The screen's response time is borderline, and although its effects are 'liveable with', they can be distracting in more frenetic shooters like *Quake* or *UT2K4*. And then

there's the price. While £522 isn't a great deal of money for a decent 19-inch screen, it's about £200 more than you'd want to pay for a faster, sleeker, 17-inch rival. Nevertheless, because of the way this ViewSonic impresses with its outstanding clarity, I reckon a smaller version could do battle with the award-winning Hitachi and come out on top. Look out for a grudge-match some time soon.

## SPECIFICATIONS

SCREEN SIZE	19-inches
RESOLUTION	1280 x 1024
RESPONSE	25ms
CONTRAST	600:1
BRIGHTNESS	250cd/sq.m.
VIEW ANGLE	H170, V170
WEIGHT	7.5kg
CONNECTIONS	D-Sub, DVI

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Exceptionally bright and sharp
- ✓ Analogue and DVI inputs
- ✗ 25ms response time
- ✗ The fiddly buttons are an ergonomic nightmare

# 76

**This is a great screen, but take a test drive before you buy.**

# BUCCANEER 3.4GHZ

■ Price: £1,699 | Manufacturer: Lan Pirates | Phone: 01926 745609 | [lan-pirates.co.uk/](http://lan-pirates.co.uk/)

**A price cut means the Buccaneer is now a real contender**

## DESKTOP PC

**LAST** month, I praised the Lan Pirates Buccaneer for its build quality, stability and outright power. At the same time, it was criticised as being prohibitively expensive and was duly presented with a large dent in its score. In response to the review, Lan Pirates has revamped its entire line-up and pricing, and recently shipped me

the updated Buccaneer for testing. This flagship monster now features a 3.4GHz P4, Intel D875PBZLK (with onboard LAN), 460W PSU, 1GB PC3200 SDRAM, MSI GeForce FX 5950 Ultra, 200GB SATA 7200RPM drive, MSI DVD-RW, MSI DVD/CDRW, Creative Sound Blaster Audigy2 7.1, Windows XP Pro and Logitech peripherals – and a price tag of £1,699. The machine remains super-tidy on

the inside and ranks at the top of benchmarks. Additionally, the way it lunches on *Far Cry* and badly-coded clunker *Battlefield Vietnam* is a sight to behold, offering seriously quick load times and hydraulically smooth gameplay. Yes, it's on the noisy side and isn't something you'd want running next to your bed, but it remains cool, composed and highly capable. And that's what you want, isn't it?

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Understated styling
- ✓ Enough grunt for gaming
- ✗ A little raucous

# 84

**Better, faster and cheaper – the new Buccaneer is a champ**







# DEAR WANDY

Once again it's time for your monthly dose of Wendy's patented Medicinal Compound, refreshing the peripherals other magazines cannot reach...

■ NOT YOUR AUNTY-Phil Wand

## LET IT ALL OUT

Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us and in turn, we may well share them with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in type thing. If you have any **top tips** to share with the group, then send them in too: if Wendy's impressed, he'll print them and send you £50 for your trouble.

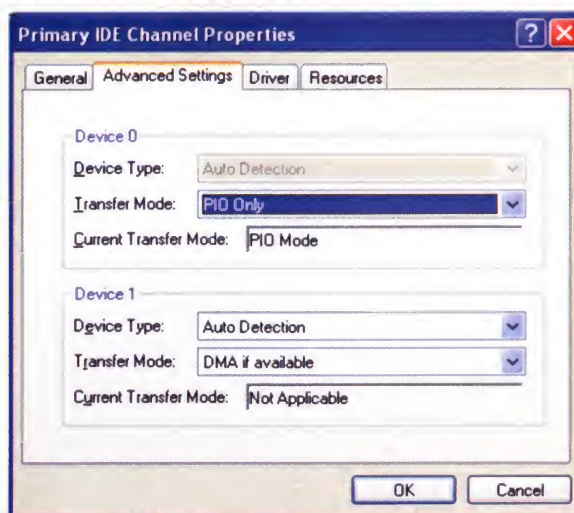
**Write to Dear Wendy, PC ZONE,** Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London, EC1V 0BQ.  
**Email** Address your letters to us at [wandy@dearwandy.com](mailto:wandy@dearwandy.com) with the subject heading 'Dear Wendy'. Please note: while we can assure you that we read absolutely every techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Sorry.

## DEPECHEZ MODE

**Q** The slowdown problem Lewis Burnell described in issue 140 seems common with people running Windows where the hard drive fails to use DMA transfer mode. The last time this happened to me, I decided to tinker with a few settings.

Here's my cure: right-click My Computer, choose Properties, select the Hardware tab to open Device Manager, then expand the IDE ATA/ATAPI Controllers branch. Double-click the primary channel, open the Advanced Settings tab and you should see a pair of group boxes containing information for the channel's two devices. The Transfer Mode drop-down box should be set to 'DMA if available', and the current transfer mode should display as 'Ultra DMA Mode X'. If the Transfer Mode drop-down shows 'PIO Only', or the Current Transfer Mode states 'PIO Mode', this is the cause of all your issues.

To cure this, go back to the Device Manager, highlight the IDE channel in question and hit delete. Reboot and wait for XP to



Has Dave Petts found the answer to Lewis Burnell's problem from a couple of issues back?

and from the disk controller, and unlike DMA can require considerable effort from the CPU – I can report that although the drive is noticeably unhurried and games take longer to load, it doesn't affect how they play, nor does it cause the mouse cursor to behave erratically. As

## PCI MODE MOFO

**Q** Over the past few months I've been upgrading my PC on a tight budget so I can play the latest games. The problem is with my MSI KT6 Delta motherboard. Whatever I try, I can't activate the AGP slot: it's disabled and operating as a PCI slot, so I'm taking a massive hit on performance.

I've updated the BIOS but this didn't have any affect. I've tried different graphics cards and drivers. Finally, I decided that it must be a problem with the motherboard and installed the latest 4-in-1 drivers. When I did this all I got was an error message saying: 'Can't run 16-bit Windows Program', followed by the location of Setup.exe in a temporary folder. This same message was also shown when I tried to load the original drivers from the CD-ROM.

Stephen Samuels

**A** An AGP slot operating in PCI mode is much like a hard drive operating in PIO mode, in that it's an electronic compromise – a kind of 'lowest common denominator' method for talking to everything. As we've already

seen, the downside is that it can blunt performance.

Luckily for you, PCI mode is an unexceptional problem and won't be something you're stuck with long term. What you need to do is get those motherboard drivers properly installed (I reckon that in mucking about with upgrades to your machine, you've made the all too common mistake of omitting software vital to your KT600 chipset). The weird message you're seeing means you should download the latest 4-in-1 zip archive from the VIA site at [www.viaarena.com](http://www.viaarena.com) and unpack it to a folder off the root such as C:\HYPINST.

The 'Can't run 16-bit Windows Program' box can crop up on older versions of the 4-in-1 install and also when you bust the pathname limit. Putting files into a root folder with a short name means such limits aren't such a problem.

You might also want to Google for the `NtfsDisable8dot3NameCreation` registry entry and ensure that one of your tweak tools hasn't altered this setting, as it can also give rise to errors. Once the chipset drivers are in place, and the same is true of any motherboard, PCI mode will disappear and AGP8x will take its place.

## THREE TONS TO HEAVEN

**Q** I've been wanting to upgrade my PC for some time now. At present, I have a Pentium 4 1.7GHz, 512MB RAM, GeForce4 Ti4600, Creative Sound Blaster Live! Value with a 30GB hard drive, all running on Windows Me. I have £300 and would like to upgrade the motherboard, CPU and soundcard. The parts need to be easy to install and also need to give me a significant boost in performance.

Johnson Davies

**"As processors have gathered speed, so the effect of PIO is greatly lessened"**

finish reinstalling devices. I hope this resolves Lewis's issues and anyone else burdened with this problem.

Dave Petts

**A** While it's true that a drive whose transfer mode is stuck in Programmed Input/Output (PIO) mode will be slower than if it were operating with Direct Memory Access (DMA), I don't think this alone is responsible for Lewis's dreadful slowdown.

Having forced the drive inside the benchmarking machine into using PIO – this 'compromise' mode requires the intervention of the processor in moving data to

processors have gathered speed, so the effect of PIO is greatly lessened.

That said, your advice is solid in that removing devices from the IDE branch in the Device Manager is an acknowledged way of enforcing a mode change – and it's worth everyone having a look to see if their system is operating as it should. Windows will choose DMA mode if it's available and indeed some DVD drives require DMA to operate correctly. However, if errors occur during DMA-based transfers, the operating system will eventually drop back to PIO as it's a safer bet.



## "Much is made of TFT response times and their suitability for gaming, viewing angle and brightness – but which would you choose?"

**A** In most circumstances you'd have been hit with the standard Wandy response asking you to hang on for a few months – but since it sounds like you've had enough of the waiting game, let's see what your budget will buy. We'll start with the motherboard.

Overclockers.co.uk are currently selling old favourite the Abit IS7-E for just £60 including VAT. The board features six-channel sound, so you can toss the Sound Blaster into a bin. Pair the IS7-E with a Pentium 4 2.8GHz for £120, and with the change you can buy yourself some decent PC3200 memory. Overclockers are new stockists of competitively priced GeIL products, so look out for the Value 512MB PC3200 twin set, which should cost you around £65 inclusive. With the change, I'd either buy a bigger hard drive or preferably an OEM copy of XP Pro from ebay.com. At £100, it'll bust the total budget by about £50, but it's the cheapest I've seen.

### HOT OR NOT?

**Q** Is my system any good? I have an AMD Athlon 2400XP, Gigabyte 7VAX-A KT400 motherboard, 512MB DDR-333, ATI Radeon 9200 128 DV, Hercules Fortissimo II soundcard and XP Home. I get an average score of 6,900 marks in 3DMark2001 – any good? Also, if I were to upgrade, what do you suggest? I don't have much money.

Anon

**A** Frankly, no. That score is on the low side, even if you take into account the fact that the Radeon 9200 isn't that special. With a decent video card, I'm sure you could expect nearer to 10,000 marks and vastly improved smoothness in your games. Tell you what, seeing as I'm in a generous



### Has Wandy gone mad?

mood, I'll do you a deal. If you can send me a brand new, shrink-wrapped copy of *The Indiana Jones Trilogy* on DVD, in return I'll send you an MSI GeForce FX 5900 which should improve your fun no end. How about that for a deal? Email me if you're interested.

### FLICKER FREE

**Q** I currently have an Iiyama Vision Master Pro 510, a nice monitor but a bit chunky. I have a good offer on a Viewsonic VP211b 21.3-inch flat panel, but at £1,300, it's a lot of money to spend on what might be a retrograde move.

Much is made of TFT response times and their suitability for video and gaming applications (the VP211b has a response time of 25ms), in

addition to brightness, viewing angle and native resolution. I guess the simple question is, given a free choice, which monitor would you choose?

The next question is more subtle. I have odd eyesight in that I can perceive flicker at low refresh rates. All my TVs at home are 100Hz. With computers, I hate it below 70Hz and still get eyestrain around this level. I don't suppose you could set up a TFT screen next to a CRT and feed them a 50-60Hz signal, then look at both screens out of the corner of your eye and tell me if they flicker in the same way?

Dave Boff

**A** It's likely the VP211b's response time won't be good enough for your fast games. The Dell I reviewed a couple of issues ago boasted a gorgeous 19-inch TFT, but because of its 25ms response, it was agony in shooters. Until manufacturers are able to offer refresh rates of 16ms and below across the range, larger products are best avoided.

As for the flickering, many people have become sensitive to refresh rates below 80Hz.



Viewsonic's VP211b is the stuff of flat screen dreams – but gamers beware.

## FAST AND FURIOUS

### NO MESSING

**Q** In preparation for the wave of new DirectX 9 games, I've decided to do a little DIY. I have an Athlon XP 2600+, MSI K7NG motherboard, 512MB PC3200 RAM, Radeon 9800 Pro 128MB and 40GB HDD. My question is, what would you upgrade next? I have a budget of £200 and am looking to future-proof my PC for around a year.

Mitzi

**A** You won't be able to future-proof your PC for any amount of money, because later this year every major component inside it will be obsolete. Your machine is a decent all-rounder and I honestly wouldn't waste any money until the summer holidays. By that time, PCI Express will be in full swing, we'll have a full range of products supporting the standard and you can make your choice accordingly.

**Q** I want to build the fastest PC possible. Please advise me what you would purchase, money no object. Well, within reason...

Gordy

**A** Building something fast is no longer the preserve of geeks: take one Extreme Edition Pentium processor, any overclocker-friendly motherboard, at least one gigabyte of PC4400 memory and some thought-provoking cooling measures. Although it wouldn't be the outright fastest, nor particularly blingy, my choice would be the better value Pentium 3.2GHz, Supermicro P4SCT+II, ASUS Radeon 9800XT, 1GB Corsair XMS3200LL, plus two Western Digital 120GB SATA Caviars in mirrored RAID. A system like this would be as reliable as it would be rapid.

**Q** I've just spent £300 on an ATI Radeon 9800 Pro. Will the new motherboards sporting PCI Express still be compatible with my AGP card? And when it comes to RAM, will my PC2700 be compatible?

Gamerman

**A** It's sickening, but the 9800 Pro can now be yours for £150. Any motherboard with a PCI Express video slot won't support an AGP card, same as an AGP slot won't support a PCI Express card. As for your memory, even if it were listed in a manufacturer's compatibility list, it's unlikely you'd want to put PC2700 memory in a new motherboard simply because it's relatively slow. Machinery such as your PC works at the speed of the slowest cog.

**Q** My broadband has an annoying bug: every time the phone is answered my connection is terminated. Otherwise it works fine. The modem is a SpeedTouch USB and my ISP is Freeserve. The only other detail I have is that the SpeedTouch connects to the phone line via a secondary plug upstairs.

Anon

**A** As long as your modem is within 100ft of your master socket, you shouldn't have any trouble. Remember that you need a DSL microfilter in each socket, not just the one with the modem. Problems such as the one you describe are most usually down to a faulty or missing microfilter, or a faulty phone plugged into another socket. If you manage to eliminate all of the above, you'll need to contact your provider and explain that you have a fault.

It's what we're used to – many Americans can't watch PAL televisions because they're used to the quicker updating NTSC. You'll be glad to hear that flat panels don't flicker at all, because unlike CRT they're not updated with a single dot jumping around phosphor. They're totally stable and if

you're prone to eye strain, you should make the swap soon. Remember that a 17-inch TFT has a viewable area roughly equivalent to a 19-inch CRT, so you won't be losing too much space if you go smaller. [E]

Visit Wandy on the web at [www.dearwandy.com](http://www.dearwandy.com)





■ CARE BEAR Adam Phillips

# WATCHDOG

Take to the streets! Throw bricks through their store fronts! Make them eat that faulty graphics card! Or avoid a lengthy prison sentence by just dropping us a line instead...

## ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Don't worry – we're here to help when you're at the end of your tether. If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing, then drop us a line.

**WRITE TO** Watchdog, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BQ

**EMAIL** Alternatively, email us at [letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk](mailto:letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk) with the subject heading 'Watchdog'

## READ ME!

If you're writing in to complain about a product, please let us know your full name, address and **contact number**. With PCs, make sure that you also include all **purchasing details** such as reference and invoice numbers.

## DAMNED BY DEMONITE?

Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned – especially a mother who's splashed out a shedload of cash on a Demonite PC for her beloved son. "The computer was faulty and therefore unusable," says Caroline Franklin. "Despite many phone calls, it took three weeks to get an engineer called out and when he finally arrived, he was unable to resolve the problem."

The PC was subsequently arranged for pick-up: "Because my son is at university, he was unable to keep the large PC boxes that it was delivered in, so this meant that when the PC was picked up, it was not wrapped as well as he might have liked."

Unfortunately, Caroline has since received a call telling her that the PC now has a large scratch down its side due to the courier trip: "Demonite is refusing to replace the PC case, blaming the damage on my son," she fumes. "As you can imagine, I'm incensed with the way we've been treated by this company, especially considering the PC was very expensive."

Watchdog stomped off to Demonite, brandishing Caroline's complaint: "On receipt of the unit, the customer reported technical



Not to be mistaken for one of Demonite's couriers...

protection. The unit was inspected and the customer contacted to be informed that due to the lack of packaging, the machine had received some scratches to the side panels of the case. The customer did not feel this was acceptable and asked for this to be rectified at Demonite's cost."

Demonite says that it has now agreed to replace the panels at no cost to you, Caroline, but reiterates that it is of vital importance that customers keep the original packaging or at least package the units sufficiently for transportation.

## A WORM IN HIS APPLE

Apple. They can do no wrong. Gorgeous design. Ingenious ergonomics. In fact, every product a must-have.

But Apple has been the bane of many a hardcore PC user – not because its machines are faster, better or more efficient. No, it's just that they have that object-of-desire appeal that no PC can match. So the two camps sit across from each other: PC owners glaring at the Apple upstarts, who in turn sit there smugly, once in a while glancing nervously at the amount of money whizzing out of their account every time they buy something for their precious Apple.

But along came the Apple iPod and offered an olive branch to PC owners. Here was an Apple

everyone could take a bite out of. Unless you're Alan Cowan, that is. "I ordered an iPod from the Apple UK Store online on February 12," he explains. "Apple confirmed shipment on Feb 14, stating that it would be 3-6 days for delivery. On Feb 20, I phoned Apple and it confirmed it would be delivered on Feb 23. When it still hadn't appeared by the 27th, I phoned Apple who said that the courier had lost it and that a replacement would be shipped that day."

He was told it would be delivered within 3-6 days, but Alan phoned again on March 4, only to be told that it still hadn't been shipped: "I was told it would be delivered by March 16," rages Alan. "The helpdesk was, as usual, no help at all. At this point, I cancelled the order –

**Bit of a rotten Apple, that.**



it seems cancelling orders is the only thing Apple is efficient at!"

We took your rant to Apple Store: "We aim to provide the highest level of service to our valued customers," says a spokesperson. "In this instance, we failed as a result of the initial order shipping within lead-time but being declared lost subsequently, due to a customer change of address. There was also a delay experienced in the replacement process."

Apple says it's been in touch and offers its deepest apologies to you, Alan.

## HARD DRIVE HARD TIMES

Buying new should mean peace of mind – that shiny piece of kit fresh from its bubble wrap should last you a lot longer than any refurbished or second-hand gubbins. Then pity poor Mark Brown: "Words cannot express how hacked off I am with IBM and Scan computers," he fumes. "Last year, I bought a IBM/Hitachi Deskstar hard drive and after four months, the drive died – meaning a loss of 80 gigs of MP3s, films and photos."

He contacted Scan, who refused to exchange the knackered hard drive for a different make: "I was incredibly wary about getting a straight replacement, and especially more so after reading some of the consumer reviews of this product. Unfortunately, I was given no other alternative but to take an identical replacement, so I took it. After five months though, without any warning, this one has failed too! Again, I have lost data, though not as much this time as I have a lot of it backed up."

Mark is still extremely hacked off: "I feel this is less than acceptable, especially since my four-year-old drive is still ticking away fine. I contacted Scan today, who refused to give me a different make of hard drive this time round – despite it being the second failure in less than a year.

**"I'm hacked off with IBM and Scan... After five months, my replacement drive failed too!"**

MARK BROWN WONDERS 'WHY ME?'

challenges which our support team helped with," says a spokesperson. "However, they were unable to rectify the fault. An on-site engineer was then arranged, but they weren't able to resolve the challenges either and so collection of the unit was arranged."

Demonite says that it did inform the customer that the unit would need to be sufficiently packaged for transportation: "However, we found the PC had been put inside a black bin liner with no

## THE ACCUSED



**GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT**





## SAINTS NOT SINNERS

ALIENWARE  
PERFORMANCE SYSTEMS



▲ WATCHDOG HAS A BIG HEART. NO, REALLY. THAT'S WHY WHEN COMPANIES DO GOOD, WE LIKE TO 'NAME AND FAME' THEM...

It's hard to miss the PCs from Alienware. Bright colours, geek boy alien symbols on the front and boasts about being the only real choice for the consummate gamer. Erm, not quite thought reader Andrew Conin when he splashed out on one of its top systems (which don't come cheap by the way).

"I was disappointed to find that while the PC would run the antique *Quake 3* demo/benchmark that came pre-installed, almost every 3D application or game I tried to install failed - from 3D Mark 2001 to *Star Wars: Galaxies*."

After a quick barrage of emails back and forth between himself and the Alienware tech support one Friday evening, it was determined that the Radeon 9800 XT card had a hardware fault. "A new one was shipped out immediately and I received it the following Monday - no questions asked and with no great rush to send back the faulty card," says Andrew. "It's great to have a company more bothered about keeping a customer satisfied than worrying about whether a customer is trying to get freebie replacements!" We think so too.



Alienware's customer service is as nifty as its machines.

Scan's agent told me that perhaps if I had six failures in six months, it would consider changing it!"

Scan tells us that it's normal company policy to replace an item on a like-for-like basis if the item is older than 28 days: "This is the policy of every retailer, certainly every one I know," says a spokesperson.

Watchdog did ask on this particular occasion if perhaps

Scan could make a gesture of goodwill because it appears that Mark is jinxed: "We will arrange for an identical specification drive from another manufacturer as a gesture. After 11 months, there will be no price differential. This will, however, not restart Mark's warranty with us, but it will give him a much longer warranty with the manufacturer." Hope this sorts it, Mark. [P2]

## IN THE DOG HOUSE

poweroid

YOU RING AND RING. THEY PROMISE TO CALL BACK - BUT THEY DON'T. WE SAY THERE'S ONLY ONE PLACE FOR THEM...

### BAD DOG POWEROID

**THE COMPLAINT** Reader Graham Tudor took delivery of his new PC and had problems from the very start. First, it didn't like booting up, then he encountered bad sectors on the new hard drive and to top it all, the company reckons it's all a software-based problem, so Graham has been told to pay for the PC to be returned for re-installation. If faulty hardware is found, only then will Poweroid cover the cost of postage. Adding insult to injury, the cheapest quote Graham has got for sending his new PC back is over 60 quid.

**THE PURSUIT** Watchdog dispatched two emails to Poweroid's customer service department, neither of which gleaned a response. Never one to give up easily, Watchdog pursued Poweroid, but was told to call back later when it tried calling the company's switchboard. Sorry, not good enough...

**THE VERDICT** Poweroid's behaviour and lack of goodwill are shameful for a computer that cost over two grand, even if the PC's problems are software-based. Piss poor.

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# BUYER'S GUIDE

**Money to burn? Don't spend it all on beer and women – computers need love too...**

Gone are the three categories of old, and in their place are three new ones. Editor's Choice is the class champ, the product that will satisfy all of you, no matter what

you play. Our Recommended product wears a silver medal, not quite as triumphant as the outright winner, but a very worthy alternative. Finally, the Also

Consider product is one we believe you should look at before settling for one of the other two – it may just tickle your dipple. If you feel we've got something wrong, or

just want to add your tuppence ha'penny, mail letters@pczone.co.uk. If we act on your suggestion, we'll be certain to shower you with gifts. Promise.

## EDITOR'S CHOICE

## RECOMMENDED

## ALSO CONSIDER

### MOTHERBOARDS



**IC7**  
STREET PRICE £85  
MANUFACTURER ABIT Computer  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [www.abit.com.tw](http://www.abit.com.tw)

Another solid and modern ABIT board with dual-channel memory configuration, two channel SATA with RAID, USB 2.0, 800FSB, plus 6-channel audio with S/PDIF. All cables included and it's overclocker-friendly, with a host of tweaking options in the BIOS. If you want high-speed networking, the IC7-G variant includes Intel Gigabit LAN on-board. The downside to these boards is they don't support earlier 400FSB Pentiums.



**K7N2 DELTA ILSR (ATHLON)**  
STREET PRICE £74  
MANUFACTURER MSI  
TELEPHONE 020 8813 6688  
WEBSITE [www.msi.com.tw](http://www.msi.com.tw)

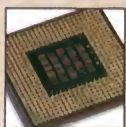
With the nForce2 chipset and the FSB wound up to 400MHz, the K7N2 Delta provides AMD die-hards with extra shove from a faster system bus and up to 3GB of Dual DDR memory. Although Barton-cored Athlons aren't a patch on their Hyper-Threaded opposite numbers, boards like the K7N2 Delta close the gap. Other features include dual IEEE 1394 FireWire and automated BIOS updates.



**875PNEO-FIS2R (INTEL)**  
STREET PRICE £116  
MANUFACTURER MSI  
TELEPHONE 020 8813 6688  
WEBSITE [www.msi.com.tw](http://www.msi.com.tw)

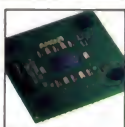
A high-end P4 Canterwood board, the Neo has some remarkable features, including dynamic overclocking – the hardware jumps on the throttle the moment you open apps – and automated BIOS updates using MSI's own Live Update software. Other features include IEEE 1394 FireWire, six-channel audio, onboard LAN and support for Dual DDR. Build quality and packaging are excellent.

### PROCESSORS



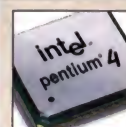
**P4 3.2GHZ**  
STREET PRICE £209  
MANUFACTURER Intel  
TELEPHONE 01793 403000  
WEBSITE [www.intel.com](http://www.intel.com)

With the price of the 3.0GHz now well below £200, it makes sense to spend a bit extra on the 3.2GHz. Hyper-threading delivers a jaw-pounding, double-whammy power hit that pushes benchmark scores well ahead of the equivalent Athlon, and an 800MHz front-side bus paired with the right memory makes its presence felt. If you've got a P4 motherboard, chances are you're already set for an upgrade to remember.



**ATHLON XP 3200+ 400FSB**  
STREET PRICE £159  
MANUFACTURER AMD  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [www.amd.com](http://www.amd.com)

No, it's not as punchy as the hyper-threaded Pentium – but it's got a great price tag. Earlier 333FSB chips can be had for around the £100 mark, but with an nForce2 or better chipset and DDR400 memory, you can enjoy the speed boost from more recent XP chips. If you want to build a low-cost, high-power PC, get a cooking video card and the AMD chip will do you proud.



**P4 2.6GHZ**  
STREET PRICE £130  
MANUFACTURER Intel  
TELEPHONE 01793 403000  
WEBSITE [www.intel.com](http://www.intel.com)

We'd previously recommended Intel's 2.4GHz 800FSB chip, but recent price slicing means the 2.6GHz chip now makes most sense. Coupled with a decent motherboard, some top-class memory and an FX 5700 Ultra or Radeon 9600XT, you'll have a machine that's muscular enough to tackle all the latest games. If you're building a home games network and want big machines for hardly any money, look no further.

### HDDS



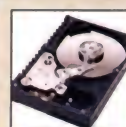
**WD1200JB 120GB**  
STREET PRICE £70  
MANUFACTURER Western Digital  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [www.westerndigital.com](http://www.westerndigital.com)

You may well view a 120GB HDD as an extravagance, but with games getting longer and broadband getting wider, a hangar-like hard drive gives you plenty of room for mucking about. You'll also bring that never-ending quest for more room to an abrupt end. The price is just right, and the performance second to none. Like the DiamondMax Plus9, the WD1200JB features an 8MB cache and a speed of 7200RPM.



**DIAMONDMAX PLUS9 80GB**  
STREET PRICE £54.50  
MANUFACTURER Maxtor  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [www.maxtor.com](http://www.maxtor.com)

The mid-sized Maxtor is for everyone: large, fast and not that pricey. Most users will find 80GB more than adequate for work, play and downloading requirements, and those greedy for more gig can jump a size up. The Fast ATA, 7200RPM drive includes Maxtor's Shock Protection System and Quiet Drive Technology, but for the Serial ATA version, expect to pay a £20 premium.



**RAPTOR 36GB**  
STREET PRICE £92.50  
MANUFACTURER Western Digital  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [www.westerndigital.com](http://www.westerndigital.com)

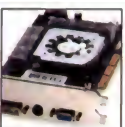
If you don't need a deep hole for your data, or if you intend keeping your dirt on a separate drive, the 10,000RPM Serial ATA Raptor makes the ideal foundation for your primary partition. It's wickedly fast, perhaps the fastest HDD available yet, and although designed for server environments, provides gaming desktops with the kind of warp-nine, low access times that make any application more nimble.

### GRAPHICS CARD



**RADEON 9800 PRO 128MB**  
STREET PRICE £153  
MANUFACTURER Sapphire Technology  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [www.sapphiretech.com](http://www.sapphiretech.com)

Bit of a no-brainer this one. In what amounts to an AGP swansong, the 128MB version of ATI's Radeon 9800 Pro can now be yours for just £150: high-end punch in a mainstream price bracket. Like the 5900 XT, it's a product from the higher echelons, remarketed to appeal to a wider audience. Unlike the GeForce, it's not been throttled: it's the real deal. Buy one now.



**GEFORCE FX 5900 XT 128MB**  
STREET PRICE £140  
MANUFACTURER XFX  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [www.xfxforce.co.uk](http://www.xfxforce.co.uk)

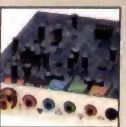
The 5900 XT offers world-beating value – a top banana card packaged up with a mid-range price tag. In benchmarks, the 5900 XT is so far out front on power, it's snapping at the heels of big boys like the 9800 Pro. If you want the card that offers more frames per second per pound than any other, look no further. AGP is on its way out with a bang.



**RADEON 9800XT 256MB**  
STREET PRICE £309  
MANUFACTURER ASUSTeK Computer  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [www.asus.com](http://www.asus.com)

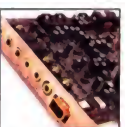
With mainstream cards hogging the two front pews, it's only fair we gave some space to the fastest card on the market: the world's best presented prize-fighter, the ASUS Radeon 9800XT. If you're lucky enough to have the requisite three hundred quid rattling around in your back pocket, why settle for anything less? You even get a coupon for *Half-Life 2* – read more about the game in our ten-page preview on page 32.

### SOUNDCARDS



**REVOLUTION 7.1**  
STREET PRICE £90  
MANUFACTURER M-Audio  
TELEPHONE 0871 7177 100  
WEBSITE [www.maudio.co.uk](http://www.maudio.co.uk)

Although it lacks a few of its rivals' gamer-friendly features, including hardware DirectSound and a joystick/MIDI port, the Revolution more than makes up for any deficit with a truly astonishing quality of sound. Unique technologies enhance your enjoyment of games, music and movies. The software is straight-talking and boasts a familiar look and feel, making the card a delight to work with.



**AUDIGY 2 ZS**  
STREET PRICE £85  
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [uk.europe.creative.com](http://uk.europe.creative.com)

A quantum leap from its predecessor, the Audigy 2 offers a boggling range of pro-gamer and DVD features, including 6.1 surround sound, EAX Advanced HD, Advanced Resolution DVD-Audio and 24-bit/96kHz recording – it was the first card to gain THX certification from LucasFilm. If you appreciate the immersive experience offered by high-fidelity surround sound, the Audigy will give you an experience like no other.



**AUDIGY 2 ZS PLATINUM PRO**  
STREET PRICE £167  
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [uk.europe.creative.com](http://uk.europe.creative.com)

With the same core features as its little brother, the Platinum Pro is guaranteed to perform and sound like no other. The external breakout box is a boon for serious listeners, including standard audio connections and volume controls. The big Platinum also offers dual SB1394 firewire ports and optical links, a stereo RCA input, plus MIDI In and MIDI Out mini-DIN sockets.



## World's Most Powerful VGA ever...





# Worldwide No.1 VGA Card Manufacturer

## EDITOR'S CHOICE

## RECOMMENDED

## ALSO CONSIDER



### MX500

**STREET PRICE** £34  
**MANUFACTURER** Logitech  
**TELEPHONE** 020 7309 0127  
**WEBSITE** www.logitech.com

Although it comes with a tail and doesn't have the same substantive feeling as the battery-reliant MX700, the MX500 remains a solid product and a solid performer in all games. It features Logitech's MX optical engine, mouse wheel (plus two additional buttons either side to aide document navigation), a task-switcher button, and two thumb buttons that speed up web navigation.



### OPTICAL MOUSE BLUE

**STREET PRICE** £20  
**MANUFACTURER** Microsoft  
**TELEPHONE** 0870 6010 100  
**WEBSITE** www.microsoft.com/uk

If you've ever been bogged by the number of buttons on a mouse, and have fond memories of a time when three clickers and a wheel were all you needed, Microsoft's blue rodent is the perfect peripheral. It's nice to look at, nice to hold and, as any veteran FPS gamer will tell you, three buttons is all you need. Plus the latest optical technology means it works anywhere.



### MX700

**STREET PRICE** £47  
**MANUFACTURER** ACTURER Logitech  
**TELEPHONE** 020 7309 0127  
**WEBSITE** www.logitech.com

Sporting the MX optical engine that made Logitech famous with gamers, the MX700 is essentially an MX500 with its tail lopped off. A cradle keeps your desk tidy and acts as a recharger for the unfettered rodent – making the mouse more attractive to people who don't do batteries. It's a touch pricey and we remain unconvinced that going cordless is worth the extra stash.

MICE



### INTERNET NAVIGATOR

**STREET PRICE** £21  
**MANUFACTURER** Logitech  
**TELEPHONE** 020 7309 0127  
**WEBSITE** www.logitech.com

The Internet Navigator lies absolutely flat on your desk, a trademark Logitech design that makes it look sleeker and 'feel' nicer. There's a scroll wheel along the left edge and a raft of customisable function keys to make trawling the web a cinch – you no longer have to swap back and forth to the mouse, and instead can leave your hands over on the keyboard. Once you browse this way, there's no going back.



### INTERNET KEYBOARD

**STREET PRICE** £15  
**MANUFACTURER** Microsoft  
**TELEPHONE** 0870 6010 100  
**WEBSITE** www.microsoft.com/uk

Forget what you've learned about Microsoft software – its hardware is always of a high build quality and, despite problems with early Intellimouse rodents, very durable. Shortcut buttons you think you'll never use soon become second nature, especially when reconfigured to suit your way of working. And once you learn the enhanced layout, you'll never go back to anything else.



### PRO KEYBOARD

**STREET PRICE** £46  
**MANUFACTURER** Apple  
**TELEPHONE** 0800 0391 010  
**WEBSITE** www.apple.com/uk

If you think we're mad for including an Apple keyboard, think again. Anyone looking for a Rolls-Royce keyboard, and who can live without all the additional buttons, scroll wheels and assorted paraphernalia, need look no further. The Apple Pro plugs straight into your USB port and, with the help of third-party utilities, disguises the fact that it was designed for computer illiterates with fewer than two mouse buttons.

KEYBOARDS



### CYBORG EVO

**STREET PRICE** £25  
**MANUFACTURER** Saitek  
**TELEPHONE** 01454 451900  
**WEBSITE** www.saitek.com

A welcome new look for Saitek, and the welcome addition of a four-way adjustable head, larger buttons, plus a meaty damped throttle at the back of the base. As with all Cyborgs, the sculpted hand-rests can be repositioned ambidextrously and will suit all hand sizes. An eight-way hat switch, five thumb buttons with trigger, four base buttons and a shift key to double the possible combinations make this a winner.



### CYBORG 3D GOLD

**STREET PRICE** £22  
**MANUFACTURER** Saitek  
**TELEPHONE** 01454 451900  
**WEBSITE** www.saitek.com

A former Best Buy, the Saitek stick is renowned for the way it can be taken apart and put back together to fit your hand perfectly, and also for its ambidextrous nature – lefties as well as righties can get to grips with it. It features seven fire buttons and, like the Sidewinder, has eight hat buttons, a lever throttle and a twist grip for controlling the rudder. At this price you'd be daft not to.



### HOTAS COUGAR

**STREET PRICE** £249  
**MANUFACTURER** Thrustmaster  
**TELEPHONE** 020 8665 1881  
**WEBSITE** www.thrustmaster.co.uk

The John Holmes of joysticks. Based on the flight controls of an F-16, sturdy metal construction makes it feel like no other peripheral. With 28 customisable buttons, 18lbs of resistance built into its springs, programmable hat switches and an adaptive action for the separate throttle arm, it transforms any flight simulation and is the ultimate toy for wannabe pilots. It's ten times the cost of a regular joystick, but is in a class of its own.

JOYSTICKS



### INSPIRE P580 5.1

**STREET PRICE** £53  
**MANUFACTURER** Creative Labs  
**TELEPHONE** N/A  
**WEBSITE** uk.europe.creative.com

We don't like the idea of blowing a ton on speakers, chiefly because the mid-range Creative products are so good. You could spend a little more on a 7.1 set, but you'd lose out on space – and there's little benefit for games players. Instead, stick to the six speaker P580s, which deliver crisp bass from the subwoofer and a clean, bright sound from the satellites. This latest design includes a headphone jack at last too.



### Z-640

**STREET PRICE** £70  
**MANUFACTURER** Logitech  
**TELEPHONE** 020 7309 0127  
**WEBSITE** www.logitech.com

Logitech has patented the pressure-driver design of its subwoofer and we can hear the difference. For the money, the clout is simply amazing – bassheads among you will love it. Higher frequencies don't disappoint either, the 5.1 sounding almost as clean and inviting as the Inspire 5300s. Unlike the Creative set, the Z-640 has a headphone socket, but it's not conveniently sited. Shame.



### MEGAWORKS THX 5.1 550

**STREET PRICE** £189  
**MANUFACTURER** Creative Labs  
**TELEPHONE** N/A  
**WEBSITE** uk.europe.creative.com

Successor to our Best Performance winner, the Megaworks 550 is a stunning 5.1 setup with five 70W capsule-shielded satellite speakers, a 150W wood subwoofer and a wired remote with a separate headphone socket. Built to THX standards, the sound quality is superb in DVDs and games – Creative's BASH system providing 500W of power that'll make you leap out of your seat.

SPEAKERS



### CML174SXW

**STREET PRICE** £340  
**MANUFACTURER** Hitachi  
**TELEPHONE** 01628 585000  
**WEBSITE** www.hitachidigitalmedia.com

When it comes to flat panel, fast-paced gaming, response times really count. And the CML174SXW has one of the lowest response times in its sector – a mere 16ms. It also delivers top-notch image quality, weighs in at just 5kg and comes in colours that'll match your kit. If you're looking to make the move from CRT, and action games are a priority for you, the handsome little Hitachi is the obvious choice.



### FLATRON L1710B

**STREET PRICE** £290  
**MANUFACTURER** LG Electronics  
**TELEPHONE** 01753 491500  
**WEBSITE** www.lge.co.uk

This 17-inch panel came within a gnat's guff of knocking our Hitachi favourite from the top spot, but its slightly fatter price tag (from the addition of a USB hub), plus inconspicuous silver and grey trim saw the L1710B lose out. But don't think it's a distant second place – things are as close as a kiss, the LG offering marginally better picture quality and matching the Hitachi for speed. Yet another nail in the CRT coffin.



### VISIONMASTER PRO 514

**STREET PRICE** £498  
**MANUFACTURER** Iiyama  
**TELEPHONE** 01438 745482  
**WEBSITE** www.iiyama.co.uk

Boasting a 22in Mitsubishi Electric DIAMONDTRON tube, 0.24mm AG pitch and flicker-free refresh rates at immense resolutions, the Iiyama is a breathtaking sight on your desktop – not least because it gobbles so much of it. The big VM also has a comprehensive on-screen menu, USB hub and audio connectors. At 1600x1200, the display is rock steady at 110Hz and so ideal for gaming.

SCREENS



### APPLE IPOD 40GB

**STREET PRICE** £400  
**MANUFACTURER** Apple  
**TELEPHONE** 020 8210 1000  
**WEBSITE** www.apple.com/uk

There are loads of MP3 players on the market but everybody wants an iPod – and the new version is even smaller (in size) yet bigger (in capacity). It weighs less than two CDs and can store up to 7,500 tracks, and as a bonus the supplied headphones are top notch too. The speedy Firewire interface (you'll need a suitable connection) and remote control rounds off a totally class act.



### ARCHOS JUKEBOX MULTIMEDIA

**STREET PRICE** £316  
**MANUFACTURER** Archos  
**TELEPHONE** N/A  
**WEBSITE** www.archos.com

While it may never win any awards for aesthetics, the Jukebox Multimedia from Archos is the Swiss Army Knife of media players. Handling one of the widest selections of file types, the player can even play back a selection of video formats including DIVX. The sound is fantastic, but the bundled headphones are shite. And it's cheaper than the mighty iPod.



### MUVO 128MB

**STREET PRICE** £67  
**MANUFACTURER** Creative Labs  
**TELEPHONE** N/A  
**WEBSITE** www.europe.creative.com

The MuVo is one of the smartest gadgets we've seen. It comes in two parts, a USB key that plugs into any system running XP (without drivers) and a battery housing. Plug it into your PC and you can back up your documents. Drag a few MP3s onto the drive and when you snap the two halves together and plug in some headphones you've got one of the smallest MP3 players on the market.

MP3 PLAYERS

# FX5700



**MSI**  
MICROSTAR INTERNATIONAL  
WWW.MSI.COM.TW





# MAILBOX

Letters form words, words form letters. Why not give it a go?

■ POSTBOY Dave Woods



## STUPID

I don't know that I can blame you for this, but the demos being released lately are just plain stupid.

First, *Colin McRae* – the damn thing crashed as soon as it tried to display its studio logo-video thingy, telling me that I hadn't got the right codec. Stupid.

Then I tried *Painkiller*, thinking that a bit of trigger-happy chaos would release the frustration – but it wouldn't let me reconfigure the keyboard. Stupid. And while I'm here, I may as well rant about *Far Cry*. When I tried to install

that demo, it tried to install to drive C, but I don't have a drive C, so it failed. Stupid.

Actually, I can't blame you, as your article on how to improve games includes some good ideas. First-class a copy to every game studio right now.

Bob

Good man Bob. We like people that talk the truth. *PC ZONE*, clever, everyone else, stupid. Keep it up.

## PC ZONE V1.07

All the games I've bought recently have been delayed. I put in a pre-order for *Condition Zero* before I grew pubic hair and I started shaving before I played the first level, which made me think. I've been a subscriber to *PC ZONE* for a few years now and you've never delayed an issue by a few months, let alone a couple of years. Does that make you brilliant? Or developers a bunch of twats?

Charles

Good point – when was the last time you had to download a patch just to make the words on our pages legible?

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■ The new XFX 5900 XT is the best graphics card we've ever reviewed and to prove it we've stuck a big fat Editor's Choice award round its neck. Write us a letter and if we think it's the pick of the month, we'll send you one to stick in your PC. What are you waiting for?

**WIN!  
A TOP  
GRAPHICS  
CARD**



## BALLS

I've pretty much given up buying new games these days – paying the best part of £40 for a game that's lukewarm doesn't seem like value for money to me. I prefer to buy games when they've been around for a while and are loads cheaper. I'm sure there are loads of people like me, so why are you so obsessed with the thrill of the new?

You regularly give three or four pages to whatever the latest 'big' game is, award it a huge score and then give it a kicking when it comes out on budget. So, a game you started off praising to the heavens when brand new gets slated when only a few months old. Do you think this makes me trust your reviews? Does it heck!

Now, I know that hardware improvements and some of the newer AI routines make older games look lame, but you need to start taking a better look at the budget end of the market. It wouldn't hurt you to take a few pages now and again to sing the praises of older and cheaper games, rather than just harping on about the next full-price *Half-Life* beater.

John Wilkinson

I couldn't agree with you more – about the games that is. Getting PC games on budget is a brilliant way of saving money and a lot of them can still swim with the big boys. But I'm not sure where you get the scoring theory from. Games that score really well full-price invariably score well at a budget price, unless they've aged massively of course.

Anyway, surely this isn't an issue for you? You'd think with your new lucrative sponsorship deals,

See page 56 for our exclusive review of *Painkiller*.



*Condition Zero* is in the shops now. No, really.

you'd be able to buy every new game released, the best PC there is and still have enough money left over to buy a few more odd-shaped balls to kick around.

## WALLACE

Dear *PC ZONE* or Dave Woods or whoever reads this first, like Dave Woods' personal secretary or whatever...

I've been thinking about how *PC ZONE* could be improved. All that writing stuff is good (if you can be bothered to read it), but I prefer to look at the pretty pictures and I think Suzy should appear on every page. If she appeared on every page, it would make the magazine appeal to a wider audience like women and stuff.

She could hold up titles and things like Mailbox and Buyers Guide – it would make the words look prettier then, too. Of course, this isn't about me wanting to see more of the beautiful Suzy each month – it's about women's rights and promoting their status as gaming champions and gamers of the future.

That's all I have to

say. Oh, apart from that Dave Woods' face is a bit freaky, so maybe you should put him nearer the back?

Anon

Such strong views, yet you don't include your name. Freaky? Why I oughta...



Young girls love *The Sims*. You heard it here first.

## THE YOUNG ONES

I read your comment about *The Sims* last issue and decided that you were talking total sense. I've been anti-*The Sims* ever since you started doing them down in your magazine, but I've never played the game so I'm just jumping on the bandwagon really. Anyway, I've now bought a copy for my daughter and she's loving it. The only downside is that I don't get much of a look-in on my own PC, unless she's in bed and then I'm supposed to be spending quality time with the ball and chain. So, I'm doing my bit to make more female gamers appear in the world, what about your other readers?

Nick Bennett

Top tip: save money by buying games when they're released on budget. See page 80 for all the latest cheap releases.





## "This isn't about me wanting to see more of the beautiful Suzy each month - it's about women's rights"

AN ANONYMOUS SUZY FAN SPEAKS



### LETTER OF THE MONTH

#### SIM MOVIE

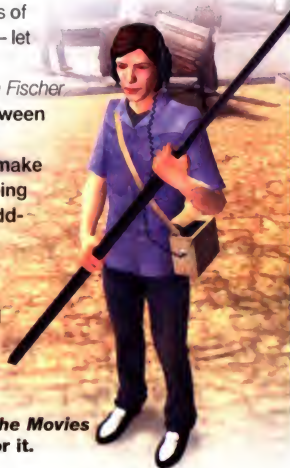
After first glancing at your preview of *The Movies*, I dismissed it out of hand because, like most of you, I despise *The Sims* and all of its worldly manifestations. But I read the article anyway, and the obvious similarities between the two games is bound to awaken the interest of the millions of *Sims* junkies who have a hankering to create their own Halle Berries and Orlando Blooms. So Lionhead is attempting to cash in on EA's success? Good on 'em I say! It makes perfect sense, even though it won't ever appeal to me. Saying that, the idea of posting your movies online and even entering them into competitions that will improve your film studio's merits if you win is genius.

But what about the darker side? Talk of expansion packs, new sets and props from current films to update your studio is just what turned most true gamers off of *The Sims*. Let's face it, *The Sims* was an innovative game, hence its success, but the expansion packs did little to improve the original. They just kept milking the cash cow for every last penny, and while most people were happy enough to throw away £20 every other month at the latest expansion, I find it inexcusable. Free downloads and patches, while less lucrative for a developer, show good sense and laudable PR. Let's just hope that Lionhead learn from the mistakes of EA. Oh, and just one more thing - let there be porn!

Evan Fischer

There might be similarities between *The Movies* and *The Sims*, but Lionhead won't be content to make a clone. Plus, *The Movies* is going to spawn a load of unofficial additions from fans on the Internet, which would make the perfect foil to any official expansion packs you don't want to spend money on. In the meantime, have a graphics card on us.

It's similar to *The Sims*, but *The Movies* has a whole lot more going for it.



The campaign starts in earnest here. If you've got a daughter or a young female relative, buy them a copy of *The Sims* and get them hooked on PCs forever. They'll be playing *Pro Evo* and *UT2004* before you can say 'do you know about the birds and the bees?'

#### 12-A-SIDE SOCCER

I have the solution to the PC's footy game problem. *Pro Evolution Soccer 3* is brilliant, but the lack of licenses and online play means it can be

improved on. So, why doesn't EA pay Konami to make the *FIFA* series? It could certainly afford it. Think about it for a minute. *FIFA* would be a decent footy game (at last), Konami would get licenses and online play (and so finally get the sales it deserves), and the uneducated PS2 owners would realise just how crap *FIFA* games are. Problem solved.

Ian Woolf

EA has got a lot of money, but Konami isn't exactly a fly-by-night company either. It might not put out much on the PC, but it's certainly a console behemoth. Anyway, the beauty of owning *Pro Evo* on the PC is that you can just download a patch that inserts all the official names and strips anyway. Problem solved. Online play should hopefully be included in the next version.

#### LAUREATE

Here's a little poem for the PC ZONE team...  
 Previewed soon  
 become reviewed  
 To the magazine I'm glued  
 The subscription renewed  
 The hundreds of pages viewed  
 I could never exclude  
 The RPGs and news  
 To the greatest of them all  
 You shall stand tall  
 With saints Peter and Paul.

Alex Cuff

Oh please, you're just making us blush... [X]



*Pro Evolution Soccer 3: still the best footy game in the world.*

### BACKCHAT



#### THE BEST OF THE CHAT FROM THE PC ZONE FORUM THIS MONTH. GET INVOLVED AT WWW.PCZONE.CO.UK

The forums aren't just there for the nice things in life - flame wars, nonsensical back-and-forths and plugs for your own websites/rock bands - they're also a suitable vessel to let us know what we're doing right or wrong in the magazine. Which is what we got you to do on the momentous occasion of issue 141, notable for the quality of words, the return of the Supertest and the all-new slimline DVD cases. Mmm, sexy, no?

"The cases are indeed very slinky," said a less-than-forthcoming **tmulford**. We'll come back to you later. Anyone else? **Spudy2000?** "My DVD case was wearing a thong and was a fat old man. I don't call that sexy, do you?" Erm, well, now you mention it...

**Deadmartyr** thought "a gremlin had been chomping" at his DVD case but added: "I really like it, as my DVDZone pile is running out of room. I'm also really glad the Supertest is back and with the staff photos. I thought Woods would do the *Vice City* thing, but I noticed that Dave is clearly wearing lipstick and eyeliner..." And what's wrong with that? **Tmulford?** Thought of anything else to say yet? "Yes. I thought the Supertests were rubbish and am not happy to see them return." Thanks for that... Next?

**Davetsutton** went straight for the meat, judging us on our *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* review. "With each passing mouthful my pleasure increased. But then, horror - I started to choke. Dumbed down AI? This cannot be. I bravely continued and came across the Second Opinion. Needless to say, Prezzar has now made my list - and I don't mean he'll be getting an Xmas card." And the rest?

"A pleasing array of previews, some satisfyingly strict scoring in the review section, the welcome return of Supertest and, wait, what's this? A beautiful young maiden with flowing blonde hair and a pink blouse..." The rest of this post involved ripped pages and beds, and has been censored for the sake of Will's mum, who reads the mag cover-to-cover every month. Our apologies, Mrs Porter.

Final word of the month goes to **Mr. Fibble13**. "The cases are very sweet. And I'm now looking forward to *Stalker*. I think you were a bit unfair on Brat Designs though (the developer of *Breed*) - it sounds to me like the publisher's to blame. Saying that though, I knew it'd be crap from the demos, so maybe it is Brat's fault. I've got one teensy little thing left to say: please let me win the *Vietcong* competition. C'mon, I'll be nice." Sorry, not good enough - where's the cheque?



### TXTCHAT



IT'S NEW! IT'S A TECHNOLOGICAL MARVEL! IT'S KICKING MAILBOX INTO THE 22ND CENTURY! IT'S TXTCHAT! (IT'S BLOODY WITCHCRAFT! - ED)

Too lazy to send a letter? Too much of a luddite to be online? No worries, just text us your thoughts and we'll print them inside this box. All you have to do is send the keyword PCZCHAT to 83125, followed by your name and your comments, quips or angry rants. Keep them relatively short or we'll be forced to hack them to pieces. Please be aware that messages sent to TxtChat cost 50p plus your standard operator (text messaging) charge. For full terms and conditions, see page 7.



# THE PCZONE A-LIST

## SHOOTERS

### FAR CRY



A huge leap for PC gaming, *Far Cry* is also an absolute joy to play. With its long-range combat, shimmering shores, impressive enemy AI and seamlessly integrated physics engine, it's the first shooter to show the potential of next-gen PC titles. The narrative may be slightly iffy, but the tension and exhilaration it instils in you makes the battle against the Trigen and their mercenary creators one of the best shooters in years.

**PUB** Ubisoft **DEV** Crytek  
**PCZ** ISSUE 140



#### CALL OF DUTY

*Call of Duty* is like the tour de force Omaha beach level of *Allied Assault*, stretched out over an entire game. Constantly managing to mix up feelings of dread, fear and excitement within you, there is no greater WWII experience.

**PUB** Activision **DEV** Infinity Ward **PCZ** ISSUE 136



#### MAX PAYNE 2

It's Payne! Slicker than slick, breathtaking and quite beautiful, *Max Payne 2* provides the greatest gaming kicks that money can buy. It's extremely short, but so tense and well-designed that you just won't care.

**PUB** Rockstar Games **DEV** Remedy **PCZ** ISSUE: 136



#### MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT

It may have been toppled by *Call of Duty*, but *Allied Assault*'s set-pieces, period detail and intense action can still beat most recent FPS releases hands-down. Its graphics may be ageing slightly these days, but it's still a hell of a ride.

**PUB** EA **DEV** EA 2015 **PCZ** ISSUE 112



#### NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

Style, stealth and magnificent set-pieces are the order of the day in this excellent spy sequel. It looks brilliant, it's well designed and is genuinely funny. What's more, it doesn't treat you like an idiot.

**PUB** Black Label Games **DEV** Monolith **PCZ** ISSUE 122



#### HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS

Unchallenged for three years, *Half-Life* redefined its genre with a cracking atmosphere and a compelling plot. It now comes bundled with the excellent *Opposing Force* add-on pack and the world's favourite mod, *Counter-Strike*.

**PUB** Vivendi **DEV** Valve Software **PCZ** ISSUE 71



#### UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

A fleshed out, revamped *UT* offering that far exceeds both its predecessors and our expectations. Extra game modes, superb vehicles plus inspired weapons and features make this one of the best multiplayer blasts around.

**PUB** Atari **DEV** Digital Extremes **PCZ** ISSUE 138



#### UNREAL II

It takes a special game to beat the gorgeous visuals of *Unreal II*. What's more, the arsenal of weaponry at your disposal is imaginative and satisfying to wield, while the sound effects, music and voice-acting all exude quality too.

**PUB** Atari **DEV** Legend Entertainment **PCZ** ISSUE 126



#### MAFIA

From the makers of *Hidden & Dangerous* and just as compelling, this game borrows from every great gangster film ever made. Tense missions, superb atmosphere and great AI - it's a classic in every respect. Badabing!

**PUB** Take 2 **DEV** Illusion **PCZ** ISSUE 119



#### JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACADEMY

The latest saber 'em up from the Lucas stable is an absolute winner; think fights with Boba Fett, double-ended lightsabers, customisable characters and even the opportunity to turn to the Dark Side. Ace.

**PUB** Activision **DEV** Raven **PCZ** ISSUE 133

## STRATEGY

### MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR



A sequel to the stunning *Shogun: Total War* (now available on budget), *Medieval* offers everything its predecessor did and a whole lot more. Adding to the massive 3D battles and turn-based *Risk*-style strategy map are a multitude of new options, both diplomatic and military. Breathtaking in every way, strategy games just don't come any better than this.

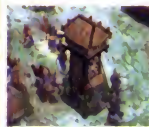
**PUB** Activision  
**DEV** The Creative Assembly  
**PCZ** ISSUE 120



#### RISE OF NATIONS

One of the most addictive and satisfying strategy games to land on our desks in ages. Its unique perspective, great gameplay and all-round freshness makes *Rise of Nations* a title worthy of our prestigious Classic award.

**PUB** Microsoft **DEV** Big Huge Games **PCZ** ISSUE 129



#### AGE OF MYTHOLOGY

The *Age Of* series goes 3D in Ensemble Studios' best strategy outing to date. Great gameplay, superb attention to detail and a strong storyline give this an unparalleled sense of atmosphere. In addition, it boasts a decent map editor.

**PUB** Microsoft **DEV** Ensemble Studios **PCZ** ISSUE 123



#### REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION

This highly original take on the machinations of political upheaval in Eastern Europe has split gaming opinion down the middle, but we think it's a fascinating, educating and unique piece of gaming history.

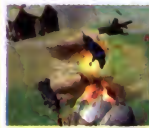
**PUB** Eidos Interactive **DEV** Elixir Studios **PCZ** ISSUE 132



#### WARRIOR KINGS: BATTLES

*Warrior Kings* was one of the most compelling and diverse RTS games we'd seen. This second chapter, which focuses around skirmish play, offers more units, varied tech trees and challenging AI generals.

**PUB** Empire Interactive **DEV** Black Cactus **PCZ** ISSUE 128



#### EMPIRES: DAWN OF THE MODERN WORLD

The latest to fall off the *Age Of Empires* lorry may not innovate, but there's a good variety of nations with accurate historical spins (General Patton, Richard the Lionheart etc), as well as novel unit types and well-written campaigns.

**PUB** Activision **DEV** Stainless Steel Studios **PCZ** ISSUE 135



#### COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS

The *C&C* series comes of age in this 3D orgy of scud missiles, daisy-cutter bombs and nuclear strikes. *Generals* is a superb-looking game with well-designed sides and offers fun in spades.

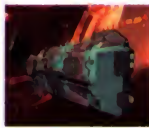
**PUB** EA **DEV** EA Pacific/Westwood **PCZ** ISSUE 127



#### COMMANDOS 2

There have been a few imitators of the squad-based strategy of *Commandos* but none have come close to this sequel. If, like us, you loved the first game, you'll love this massive and preposterously detailed follow-up even more.

**PUB** Eidos **DEV** Pyro Studio **PCZ** ISSUE 108



#### HOMEWORLD 2

The interface to this epic space combat RTS might be a bit intimidating for rookies, but *Homeworld 2* definitely deserves a place in our hall of fame. Staggering visuals and gripping strategic manoeuvring make it addictive.

**PUB** VU Games **DEV** Relic **PCZ** ISSUE 134



#### WARCRAFT III

While not a huge departure from the original, *Warcraft III* is an extremely enjoyable and polished package. The storyline is brilliant and the multiplayer action dangerously addictive. Simple, solid entertainment.

**PUB** VU Games **DEV** Blizzard **PCZ** ISSUE 119



Welcome to the **PC ZONE A-List**, the definitive buyer's guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages aren't just good, they're the best of the best in their respective genres, and our list is continually updated to show how each game stands in relation to its peers

## ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

### KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC



The best RPG to appear for five whole years, and the best *Star Wars* game to surface in ten. *Knights Of The Old Republic* manages to develop the franchise more than even Lucas's cinematic efforts ever could. With beautiful graphics, a gripping plot, oodles of Force powers and supreme character development, this is proof, if ever it were needed, that Bioware is one of the best development houses on the planet.

PUB: Activision DEV: Bioware  
PCZ ISSUE 137



#### DEUS EX

Great sci-fi plot, amazing attention to detail and unparalleled player freedom: combining the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief*, *Deus Ex* is an RPG of complex beauty and a true revolution in computer gaming.

PUB Eidos DEV Ion Storm  
PCZ ISSUE 93



#### THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

One of the most impressive RPGs we've seen in years. A massively open-ended world full of beautiful visuals, superb depth of gameplay and innovative character development make this a classic that will keep you totally absorbed.

PUB Ubisoft DEV Bethesda Softworks  
PCZ ISSUE 117



#### NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

The maker of the epic *Baldur's Gate* series proves it's still a leading force in the world of RPGs with this glorious hardcore 3D adventure. It features great single and multiplayer options, along with a very accessible toolkit.

PUB Atari DEV Bioware  
PCZ ISSUE 118



#### PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

An incredible game from Black Isle, using the *Baldur's Gate* engine. With a compelling story, well-scripted dialogue and the best character development we've seen in any game of its kind, this is a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG.

PUB Interplay DEV Black Isle Studio  
PCZ ISSUE 87



#### DUNGEON SIEGE

Graphically brilliant, massively enjoyable and highly immersive, *Dungeon Siege* is one of the best RPGs to date and only misses out on a Classic award because of the shortcomings in the narrative.

PUB Microsoft DEV Gas Powered Games  
PCZ ISSUE 115



#### SYSTEM SHOCK 2

Definitely one of the most original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it with the lights off if you're hard enough.

PUB EA DEV Irrational Games  
PCZ ISSUE 80



#### BALDUR'S GATE II

The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. The sequel isn't vastly different, but it's bigger, better and still extremely addictive. If PC role-playing's your thang, this is essential.

PUB Interplay DEV Bioware  
PCZ ISSUE 96



#### DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

It's had most of its role-playing elements sucked out and developed a strong console bias, but the gripping plot and action remain intact. It wasn't the revolution we wanted, but it's still a worthwhile purchase.

PUB Eidos DEV Ion Storm  
PCZ ISSUE 137



#### DIVINE DIVINITY

This epic RPG contains the action of *Diablo II* combined with the storyline of the *Baldur's Gate* series, not to mention about 200 hours of gameplay in a huge fantasy world. The name may be a bit silly, but the gameplay is anything but.

PUB CDV DEV Larian Studios  
PCZ ISSUE 121

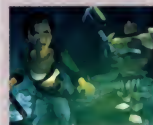
## ACTION/ADVENTURE

### SPLINTER CELL



At long last we've got a new king of the action-adventures with the Tom Clancy-influenced *Splinter Cell*, and a new crown prince of stealth in the form of the über-flexible Sam Fisher. *Splinter Cell* features the perfect blend of action, structure and pace, combined with some of the best visuals and set-pieces around. No self-respecting gamer should miss out on this.

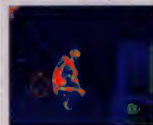
PUB Ubisoft  
DEV Ubisoft Montreal  
PCZ ISSUE 125



#### BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

A beautiful game with a myriad of styles that evokes the spirit of *Little Big Adventure*, along with a touch of *Zelda* sparkle. Whether you're fighting government conspiracies or photographing wildlife, it's never dull.

PUB Ubisoft DEV Ubisoft  
PCZ ISSUE 138



#### SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

**NEW ENTRY** Two games in one: a set of excellent, if not revolutionary, missions for Sam Fisher coupled with a scintillating spies vs mercs multiplayer mode. Single-player is more of the same, but that's no bad thing is it?

PUB Ubisoft DEV Ubisoft  
PCZ ISSUE 141



#### PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

The fluidity, ingenuity and graphical splendour of *The Sands Of Time* cannot be faulted. Combat may be unsatisfying, but the time-control gimmicks and fast-paced acrobatics put Lara to shame.

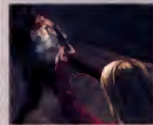
PUB Ubisoft DEV Ubisoft Montreal  
PCZ ISSUE 136



#### GRIM FANDANGO

If you've followed LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must. The scripting is impeccable, while sublime graphics and brilliant humour ensure it's top of its genre.

PUB Activision DEV LucasArts  
PCZ ISSUE 71



#### SILENT HILL 2: DIRECTOR'S CUT

Survival horror games have truly come of age with this superbly creepy and atmospheric offering. The (near identical) third game is also out, but for our money this is still the champ. Classy and disturbing.

PUB Konami DEV Konami  
PCZ ISSUE 126



#### METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

A convincing PC conversion that adds tanker-loads of side-missions, training stages and unlockable characters to the PS2 original. There's too much waffle, but it's still an excellent third-person sneakefest.

PUB Konami DEV Konami  
PCZ ISSUE 127



#### SOUL REAVER 2

With narrative and puzzles that *Legacy Of Kain: Defiance* failed to improve on, this instalment of the Raziel saga is well worth a look. Compelling storyline and satisfying combat make it an excellent budget buy, despite the ageing graphics.

PUB Eidos DEV Crystal Dynamics  
PCZ ISSUE 111



#### DISCWORD NOIR

Although the point-and-click adventure game is dying, *Discworld Noir* is still very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and all the better for it, in our opinion.

PUB Atari DEV Perfect Entertainment  
PCZ ISSUE 79



#### BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON

It has its detractors, but nobody can deny that the third *Broken Sword* game seamlessly reinvents the traditional point-and-click into the realm of 3D. The dialogue may grate, but it's still well worth a look.

PUB THQ DEV Revolution  
PCZ ISSUE 136



## ◀ GOD GAMES ▶

## BLACK & WHITE



Although it had its critics, we still stand by our original verdict. Peter Molyneux's vision is pure and the design of the game breaks boundaries and serves as a blueprint for the future. The add-on *Creature Isle* is also available, which cuts down on micro-management and enables you to guide your creature through a variety of mini-games. Pure genius in a box.

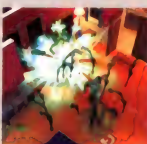
PUB EA DEV Lionhead Studios  
PCZ ISSUE 100



### CIVILIZATION III

*Civilization III* sticks to the same compulsive gameplay that made the first two games so popular. Die-hard *Civ* fans will relish the improved visuals and animation, while the new user-friendly interface makes the game accessible to the first-timer. Brings to mind the maxim 'if it ain't broke...'

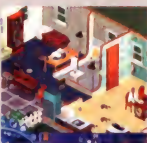
PUB Atari DEV Firaxis Games  
PCZ ISSUE 111



### GHOST MASTER

Take your team of ghosts into the town of Gravenville and solve some otherworldly problems, scare a few mortals and bag yourself some new team-mates in this innovative spook 'em up. *Ghost Master* is one of the freshest and funniest games we've seen for a long time.

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Sick Puppies  
PCZ ISSUE 130



### THE SIMS

Revolutionary at birth, the concept has since been diluted through numerous add-ons and an unhealthy long stay in the charts. It's now little more than a cash cow for Electronic Arts, although you can't help but admire the strength of community and the fact that it's still selling by the bucket-load.

PUB EA DEV Maxis/EA  
PCZ ISSUE 87



### VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG

An in-depth tycoon game with all the 3D graphical glitz and glamour of Vegas itself, *Make It Big* provides hotels, casinos and over-priced magic shows that let you suck the money out of punters' pockets. It can get a little too fiddly, but it looks and plays really well. A PC ZONE 'Essential'.

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Deep Red  
PCZ ISSUE 135



### SPACE COLONY

Whether you're trying to attract space-tourists or battle neighbouring aliens, taking control of 20 rowdy space colonists and pandering to them makes for a charming and original management jaunt, with plenty of missions to keep you busy for a fair while.

PUB Gathering DEV Firefly Studios  
PCZ ISSUE 136



### CAESAR III

Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens by balancing their work, health and entertainment needs. So what? So it's probably one of the most utterly absorbing and addictive god sims in existence. Hail Caesar.

PUB VU Games DEV Impressions  
PCZ ISSUE 70



### EMPEROR: RISE OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

This intricate game comes from the same stable as *Zeus* and *Caesar* – and they know a thing or two about city building. There's a massive amount of gameplay and more than 50 missions spanning seven historic campaigns. As well as the economic considerations, you'll have to follow feng shui and the Chinese zodiac.

PUB VU Games DEV Breakaway Games  
PCZ ISSUE 121



### SIM CITY 4

The latest outing of the best-selling city-building sim goes 3D. Unfortunately, there are no huge leaps forwards in gameplay, but there are plenty of features, such as regional cities, imported characters from *The Sims* and a terrain editor to keep you occupied.

PUB EA DEV Maxis  
PCZ ISSUE 125



### DUNGEON KEEPER 2

The ultimate 'it's good to be bad' game, *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea and *DK2* keeps up the good work. It takes the essence and humour of the original, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics and adds a myriad of new features that build wisely on the original concept.

PUB EA DEV Bullfrog  
PCZ ISSUE 79

## ◀ MULTIPLAYER MODS ▶

## COUNTER-STRIKE (HALF-LIFE)



Despite the troubled single-player release, it seems that *Counter-Strike* will always be the mod that rules the Earth. The popularity of this terrorist versus counter-terrorist mod shows no sign of abating, and there are few PC gamers who don't have a mental map of the troublespots of *de\_dust*. At one point there were more CS servers than every other online game put together and it isn't going to leave us any time soon.

WEB [www.counter-strike.net](http://www.counter-strike.net)



### THE SPECIALISTS

Blending *Half-Life* Team Deathmatch with kung-fu, slo-mo gymnastics makes this a must-play mod. With a range of maps and *Matrix*-esque bullet trails, it provides a nice break from the uber-realism of *Counter-Strike*.

WEB [www.specialistsmod.net](http://www.specialistsmod.net)



### DESERT COMBAT (BF 1942)

This *Battlefield 1942* TC focuses on desert-based conflicts from the last decade, playing through scraps like the original Desert Storm and the troubles in Somalia. It's extraordinarily popular and really rather good.

WEB [www.desertcombat.com](http://www.desertcombat.com)



### NATURAL SELECTION (HALF-LIFE)

This superb *Half-Life* mod sees marines squaring off against the aliens in various sci-fi environments. With the marines working in teams and the aliens acting like mentalists, the variety in gameplay makes this a sure-fire winner.

WEB [www.natural-selection.org](http://www.natural-selection.org)



### DAY OF DEFEAT (HALF-LIFE)

This atmospheric, highly realistic and superbly designed *Half-Life* mod covers various battles from deep within WWII. Its different character classes and superb arsenal of weapons add to authenticity, fun and general carnage.

WEB [www.dayofdefeatmod.com](http://www.dayofdefeatmod.com)

## ◀ MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ▶

## EVERQUEST



*EverQuest* keeps going from strength to strength and now has a total of five expansion packs. One of the best of these, *Planes Of Power*, provides a multitude of simplifications to help newcomers, while adding lots of new worlds for high-level characters to explore. It's a truly beautiful and captivating game that has claimed the souls and social lives of thousands of people the world over.

PUB Ubisoft DEV Sony Online Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 117



### PLANETSIDE

Truly the mother of online battles, *PlanetSide* is a never-ending war among three armies and waged across several continents. Superb squad battles, stunning vehicles and atmospheric visuals make for a remarkably immersive experience.

PUB Ubisoft DEV Sony Online Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 131



### EVE ONLINE

*Eve Online* is as beautiful as it is complex, oozing style from every pixel. Choose from four unique races and explore the *Eve* universe with its unparalleled scope for adventure, interaction and trade.

PUB Crucial DEV CCP

PCZ ISSUE 130



### ANARCHY ONLINE

A beautiful MMOG with detailed environments and a huge selection of armour and weapons, *Anarchy Online* is an immersive title. Many of the bugs have been ironed out and the latest update offers a slick gaming experience.

PUB Funcom DEV Funcom

PCZ ISSUE 114



### A TALE IN THE DESERT

No guns, no death, just the peaceful rolling dunes of ancient Egypt. This bizarre, yet beautiful MMOG sees you attempting to build a utopian society, farming camels and progressing through the seven tests of man.

PUB eGenesis DEV eGenesis

PCZ ISSUE 133



## 3D ACTION / STRATEGY

### OPERATION FLASHPOINT GOLD



Now available with the tricky *Red Hammer* add-on, *Flashpoint* has become to tactical action what *Half-Life* was to shooters. Fight on foot or in tanks, fly planes or even direct an entire platoon, this game is total war – in your face and on a massive scale. The graphics are an acquired taste, but they convey a sense of wide-open warfare perfectly. It's the ultimate military simulation, with a stunning atmosphere and superb missions.

PUB Codemasters DEV Bohemia Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 104

### HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2

With a real *Boy's Own*-feel, a ninja-bastard difficulty rating and the same superb engine as *Mafia*, *H&D 2* is one of the finest squad-based tactical shooters around. It's got a few bugs, but it's still an essential purchase.

PUB Gathering DEV Illusion Softworks

PCZ ISSUE 136

### RAINBOW SIX: RAVEN SHIELD

All the style and presentation you would expect from a Tom Clancy game, from the realism of the weapons down to footprints in the snow. A tactical and atmospheric game that can be frustratingly tricky at times.

PUB Ubisoft DEV Ubisoft Montreal

PCZ ISSUE 127

### HIDDEN & DANGEROUS: DELUXE

This revamp of *H&D* removes all of the infamous bugs from the original, as well as including three extra campaigns. There's been a lot of work put into improving the graphics and modding fans will relish the new editor that ships with this edition.

PUB Take 2 DEV Illusion Softworks

PCZ ISSUE 115

### HOSTILE WATERS

A brilliant RTS/action game you can play purely strategically or up close and personal. Inspired by the 16-bit classic *Carrier Command*, it's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options.

PUB Rage DEV Rage Software

PCZ ISSUE 101

## DRIVING GAMES

### GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY



PS2 owners will finally stop gloating when they see *Vice City*'s glorious PC incarnation. *GTA3* was an incredible crim-sim; so incredible that it was hard to see how it could be improved, but the freedom and variety of its follow-up is blinding. Whether it's carrying out its remarkably inventive law-breaking missions or just shooting pedestrians, *Vice City* is about as close to gaming perfection as you can get.

PUB Rockstar Games DEV Rockstar North

PCZ ISSUE 131

### GRAND THEFT AUTO III

It may have been overshadowed by its younger brother, but *Grand Theft Auto III* remains as awesome as it ever was. It's a great spin on both driving and shooting genres and you'll still love its noisy orgy of violence and speed.

PUB Rockstar Games DEV Rockstar North

PCZ ISSUE 117

### COLIN MCRAE RALLY 04

More of a tweak than an overhaul, the fourth *McRae* boasts immaculate handling and oodles of gameplay potential. With an excellent damage model and plentiful motor-fiddling opportunities, it's the best rally game around.

PUB Codemasters DEV Codemasters

PCZ ISSUE 140

### NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND

Illegal street racing, jazzed-up supercars and such a strong sense of speed that you yelp when you turn corners. *Underground* is a superbly designed and extraordinarily pretty tonic for testosterone-addled speed freaks.

PUB EA DEV Black Box

PCZ ISSUE 137

### GRAND PRIX 4

You won't find a more accurate racing sim. Graphically lush and full of anal detail, Geoff Crammond's latest effort offers in-depth telemetry and a staggering number of options. *Grand Prix 4* is leading the grid in the world of racing sims.

PUB Atari DEV Simergy

PCZ ISSUE 119

## SPORT

### CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4: SEASON 03/04



A fresh season is added to the *CM4* canon, along with a variety of nips and tucks to smooth out the gameplay. The top-down match engine that enables you to watch how your players are performing still works like an absolute dream. The ongoing financial crises plaguing football means that playing the transfer market is a struggle, but the game is still as life-sappingly addictive as it ever was.

PUB Eidos DEV Sports Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 137

### PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3

Our guilty console secret has landed on the PC, and it's as good as we hoped. Better than *FIFA* in every conceivable way (bar the official licence of course), there is no greater footie experience available.

PUB Konami DEV Konami

PCZ ISSUE 136

### VIRTUA TENNIS

Who would have believed that this console favourite would translate so well to the PC? Its control interface is supremely intuitive, while the AI is massively challenging. Best of all, though, are its truly sublime multiplayer options.

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Hitmaker/Strangelite

PCZ ISSUE 114

### TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

This third edition of Tony Hawk's classic skateboarding game is an absolute joy to play. It features enormous levels, more interaction than ever before and a totally kick-ass soundtrack.

PUB Activision DEV Neversoft Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 98

### TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004

Each *Tiger* game seems to be getting progressively easier, but this latest effort is eminently playable. With superb graphical touches, an immersive career mode and courses that feel 'alive', you'll find it difficult to put down.

PUB EA Sports DEV Headgate Studios

PCZ ISSUE 135

## SPACE COMBAT

### X2: THE THREAT



Vast, engrossing and utterly compelling. We firmly believe that *X2* is the game that can finally banish the memory of *Elite* to the shadows. The level of detail here is immense, as is the potential. Build your own space empire, form a pirate fleet or just bomb around the universe like an interstellar playboy. The game could go on forever. And did we mention it's also gobsmackingly beautiful? OK, the story isn't all that, but while nothing's perfect in life, *X2* comes very close.

PUB Deep Silver DEV Egosoft

PCZ ISSUE 138

### FREELANCER

*Freelancer* combines the epic open-endedness of *Elite* with the combat immediacy of the *Wing Commander* series. It also mixes in a well played out (if short) story and gorgeous graphics to create a totally engaging experience.

PUB Microsoft DEV Digital Anvil

PCZ ISSUE 128

### X - GOLD

The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. It rewards patience with variety and months of absorbing gameplay. Deeply hypnotic and beautiful rather than tense and frenetic.

PUB THQ DEV Egosoft

PCZ ISSUE 82

### TERMINUS

Who says the days of bedroom programming are over? *Terminus* proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and passion – we reckon it just edges out the mighty *FreeSpace 2*.

PUB www.macgames.co.uk DEV Vicarious Visions

PCZ ISSUE 93

### Freespace 2

Following in the footsteps of *Wing Commander* and *X-Wing*, *FreeSpace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It has an epic story and superb graphics, but does suffer from being a bit short-lived if you don't play online.

PUB Interplay DEV Volition Inc

PCZ ISSUE 84



# DISC PAGES

## DOUBLE-TROUBLE!

The PC ZONE DVD is now double-sided, which means you get twice as much content as before. If you can't find what you're looking for on the DVD, close the PC ZONE disc browser and turn the disc over.

## DISC DRIVE

## DISCWORLD

■ WORDS & DISCS Suzy Wallace

▲ Driving's great isn't it? It's a chance to sit back, listen to your own music and hone your awareness and co-ordination skills as you skim effortlessly along the tarmac. Unfortunately, doing it in the real world has its downsides though – traffic jams, the constant threat of violent death and, of course, white van men. My advice would be to stick to the virtual roads, courtesy of the two spanking demos from Codemasters we've got for you on this month's cover discs. As well as a single-player demo of the fantastic *TOCA Race Driver 2* (see the review on page 64 to find out just how fantastic we thought it was), you've got the chance to sample the multiplayer side of *Colin McRae Rally 04* with an exclusive LAN and Internet demo of the best rally game ever.

This month's discs also sport an exclusive demo of the unique, sci-fi RTS *Perimeter*, along with a spaced-out three-day trial of *EVE Online*, and the all-new adventures of Sam Fisher in *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* (single-player and multiplayer). If you've got a DVD drive (and if you haven't I'd like to know why), there are more exclusive demos in the shape of *Punic Wars: A Clash Of Two Empires*, *Black Mirror*, *Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising*, an alternate *Painkiller* demo and a whole lot more besides. So whether you enjoy a spot of rallying, alien-splatting or stealth adventure, there's something here for you. Enjoy...



Like a scene from the third *Matrix* film. But much better, of course.

# PERIMETER

CD1/DVD Pub: Codemasters Dev: K-D Labs

Reviewed: Issue 142, 81%

With an ever-steady flow of C&C and WWII clones clogging up the airwaves, it's refreshing to find an RTS that tries something a bit different. In *Perimeter*, your only resource is energy. You have to flatten land, build a stinking great generator on top and use the power supply to create buildings and units.

Your troops are grouped into squads populated by three different units – soldiers, officers and technicians – which can be combined to create more powerful

variations, providing you've got the right laboratories. This unit morphing is crucial to the game, enabling you to cross rough terrain by changing into aircraft, before transforming back into rocket launchers to nuke the shit out of the enemy base.

Defence comes in the shape of the eponymous force field, which surrounds your base with a near impenetrable, amorphous blob of light that drains your energy faster than an iPod goes through its battery.



Use the force (field).



Trespassers beware!

## HELP!

**CD trouble?** Don't worry – phone our helpline on 08700 711482. The line is open weekdays between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, or email [pc\\_zone@interchange.co.uk](mailto:pc_zone@interchange.co.uk).

### BEFORE YOU DIAL...

If you're calling the helpline:

- If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant

information – ie system type, soundcard, RAM and so on, along with the nature of the fault.

- Have a pen and paper to hand so you can jot down the relevant info.

### MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

- To run the software on these discs, you need at least a PIII 1GHz or equivalent, with a GeForce 3 64MB graphics card and 256MB RAM (512MB recommended for Windows XP users).

## WALKTHROUGH

### EVOLUTION

MORPHING IS KEY TO SUCCESS IN *PERIMETER* – HERE'S HOW TO BREED YOUR LEAN, MEAN, KILLING MACHINES...



**1** First, create a Command Centre to give you control of a squad and then get your little workers to concentrate on building a few soldier and officer plants. Now you've got the basic building blocks for creating your army.



**2** Select the squad icon at the right-hand side and start picking either soldiers or officers to join the squad. Which ones you pick will determine which troops your squad can morph into.



**3** Provided you have the right units and laboratories, you can morph your squad into whatever type of troop you like. Soldiers can morph into rocket launchers, officers into snipers and a mix of the two into other types of troop.

## DISCLAIMER

■ This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it's always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it.

■ Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) that may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.



# SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

CD2/DVD Pub: Ubisoft Dev: Ubisoft Reviewed: Issue 141, 89%

It's a festival of furtive action this month, with two demos from *Pandora Tomorrow*, Ubisoft's ace stealth sequel. The first demo comprises a short yet tense single-player mission set on a speeding train, while the second gives you a taste of the game's innovative 'Spies vs Mercs' multiplayer.

First up, the single-player demo. Requiring equal parts patience and timing, the mission sees you working your way through – as well as over and under – the Paris-to-Nice night train. Your job is to find Norman Soth, a shady terrorist and possible double agent, and tap his phone conversation with a laser mic. It's one of the more straightforward missions in the game, and provided you remember your stealth basics, you'll be fine.

The multiplayer demo is a different story. The game mode is basic in concept – hide and seek with guns – but there are countless intricacies to discover and even stealth veterans may be a bit bewildered at first. The demo contains just one map, Mount Hospital, and one mode, Neutralization, which tasks the Spy team with finding and hacking a number of terrorist devices. It works a bit like a bomb-defusing mission in *Counter-Strike*, but with a maximum of four players and two very different playing styles.

Remember: you'll need a mouse with a wheel to get the most out of *Pandora Tomorrow*. The wheel is used for context menus and movement speed, so if you haven't got one, upgrade now!



You must play the new multiplayer mode.

**SINGLE-PLAYER AND MULTIPLAYER DEMOS**

**EXCLUSIVE**



And you thought your commute was difficult...

## HUNT AND SNEAK

### GETTING STARTED IN PANDORA TOMORROW MULTIPLAYER



**1** The first thing to do is choose a team. The Spies play in third-person and employ all the usual stealth-action tricks, while the Mercs play in first-person and have grenades, traps and mines at their disposal. Get to know them both before you go online.



**2** The game really only comes into its own when everyone is familiar with the maps. In the demo level, all the rooms are numbered, making it easier to find your way round, but there are countless other ins and outs to discover if you're going to win the day.



**3** One of the first things you'll notice is the 'enhanced reality' feature, which highlights objectives on your HUD. A good trick is to lock on to a specific objective (making the rest invisible): press B, zoom in on the target and then press the action key.



# COLIN MCRAE RALLY 04

CD1/DVD Pub: Codemasters Dev: Codemasters Reviewed: Issue 140, 84%



We're not crap, we're just making way for other drivers. Honest.

*Colin McRae Rally 04* is, without a doubt, the best rally game available on the PC – but it's a lonely business, with just your co-driver for company. But, while the main thrust of the game might be all about shaving seconds off your stage times, there's a multiplayer component as well, and this demo enables you to fire up a game on a LAN or over the Internet, and take

on up to eight different players.

You're not actually racing with your opponents – they just appear as ghost cars without any collision detection – but the thrill of the chase is still there. It's also a good way of comparing yourself to other drivers, to see where you're losing or gaining time over your ghostly opponents.





# TOCA RACE DRIVER 2: THE ULTIMATE DRIVING SIMULATION

**CD1/DVD Pub:** Codemasters **Dev:** Codemasters **Reviewed:** Issue 142, 89%

Colin McRae might be the most famous of Codemasters' racers, but *TOCA* is now its best, something you can see for yourself with the three free races in this demo.

*Race Driver 2* sports some of the most authentic damage modelling we've seen thanks to the all-new Terminal Damage Engine, which means you can't use the opposition as a means of getting yourself round a corner. One hard bump could potentially mean the end of your race, and non-fatal scrapes could lose you top-end power. Time for the AA.



AMG Mercedes touring car - I want one.



Brings a new meaning to the term 'two-wheel drive'.

# EVE ONLINE

**CD2/DVD Pub:** Crucial **Dev:** CCP **Reviewed:** Issue 139, 91%



Marvel at the infinite beauty of deep space.

As 'online *Elites*' go, *EVE* has gone from strength to strength ever since its release in 2001. The game broke a new record for the most number of simultaneous users online recently (over 8,000), so to help celebrate we've teamed up with developer CCP and stuck the full client on our discs, complete with a free three-day trial. Just install and register an account, and soon you'll be living the life of a space cowboy.

To start, you'll need to create a character, almost a game in itself as you twist, turn, pull and prod an infinitely morphable face into what you want. Four different races provide starting templates, and with a basic head shape sorted, adjust everything from the position of your eyeballs to the colour of the background.

Once logged in, you get a basic starting ship and a brief tutorial. Follow your guide's instructions and you'll soon get the hang of zipping about the universe and earning a crust. Your starting space

station should contain a corporate agent who'll be able to provide a handful of starter missions to get you on your way.

A useful tip to begin with is to open your character sheet and start training a skill straight away, as skills take several hours of real-time to learn. Handily, you can even continue learning skills when you log off - so before quitting each session, check you've got one running that'll be ready by the time you log back in.

The other thing to consider is finding a good guild (or corporation as they're known in *EVE*) - then join up with fellow space farers in your quest for fortune and glory. Each station houses a number of player and NPC-run corps - check out the ads and contact the recruiting officer. This way, you'll not only have your own meagre starting funds to work with, but also any corporation equipment they're willing to share. If you're lucky, they may even let you dip into the company piggy bank.

## COMPETITION

# WIN WITH EVE

Go ice-hiking in Iceland with CCP!

As if exploring the majesty of space wasn't enough of a treat, we've teamed up with the developers of *EVE Online* and this.is/iceland to give one lucky reader the chance to explore the majesty of Iceland too! And if you don't come in first, we've got a Radeon 9800XT as second prize and a Radeon 9600XT up for grabs for third place.

Win first prize and you'll be flown with a mate to Reykjavik, courtesy of Icelandair, where you'll be given the choice of a number of adventure packages, from a jeep tour to ice-hiking by this.is/iceland!

Accommodation (Thursday-Sunday) will be provided by the newly-built Hotel Fron, situated just 50m from the CCP HQ itself. The winner will also be given a guided tour of the *EVE* offices and get to meet the team responsible for modelling an entire universe. All in all, a pretty spectacular prize!

To win, all you have to do is simply install the game on this month's discs



Hotel Fron, at the heart of Reykjavik.

and register an account. You'll then be automatically entered into the prize draw and we'll print the names of the winners in the next couple of months. Simple as that!

You must be 18 or over to enter and have a valid passport. All other normal competition rules and regulations apply - see page 7 for more details.



Not just a prize, but an adventure!



**PLUS:** THREE SPECTACULAR MOVIES FROM THE NEXT-GEN MICROSOFT DEVELOPMENT PLATFORM, XNA, (*CRASH*, *FILM NOIR* & *XENOMORPH*), A FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE AMAZING CRASHES IN *FLATOUT*, THIS MONTH'S COMMUNITY CHEST FILES (P112), FOUR GAME SERVER BROWSERS (REVIEWED IN THE ONLINE SECTION P100 & 101), PATCHES FOR *FAR CRY*, *HIDDEN & DANGEROUS*, *SACRED* AND *X2: THE THREAT*, THE *BATTLEFIELD* MOD DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT, THE *X2* MODDER KIT AND A BONUS ONSLAUGHT MAP FOR *UT2004*!



# DVD EXCLUSIVES

ONLY AVAILABLE ON PC ZONE'S DVD EDITION. TO SUBSCRIBE, TURN TO PAGE 114. FOR FULL CONTENTS, SEE BACK OF THE BOX

## THE ESSENTIAL SELECTION

The PC ZONE DVD is double-sided. Flip it over and you'll find The Essential Selection, which gives you the ten best demos of the last year (including *Far Cry*, *Max Payne 2* and *X2*), the five mods of the month, plus an exhaustive library of patches, drivers, utilities and modding tools. Everything you need to make your mates dead jealous, in fact.

## PUNIC WARS: A CLASH OF TWO EMPIRES

**DVD Pub:** Mango Tree Group **Dev:** Haemimont Games



**A rush for last orders.**

Fight as either the mighty Romans or the crafty Carthaginians (try saying that after a few pints) in this dubiously named RTS. The Carthaginian mission sees you in control of Hannibal and his forces (including the obligatory elephants), and your task is to take the Roman fort at the top of the map. Naturally, there are a few obstacles in your path – a small army,



**Surround, move in and massacre.**

two fortified outposts and four to five screens of troops protecting the fort itself, to be precise.

Dress up as a Roman and you're charged with taking an entire island. With two foes to look out for (Carthaginians and the Syracuse), you'll have to defend Messina while targeting cities, outposts, shipyards and villages. Good luck!

## PAINKILLER

**DVD Pub:** Dreamcatcher **Dev:** People Can Fly  
**Reviewed:** Issue 142, 83%



**This lot are just asking for a stake in the head.**

This second demo of the fantastic new shooter (reviewed on page 60) brings two new levels – the medieval town and Oriental Castle, as well as another trip to see Thor, the big boss with the big hammer. The medieval town is populated by many friendly locals – from the guys crawling around on the floor throwing their guts at you, to the skull-headed witch who cackles as she

passes on her broomstick. The stake gun is the ultimate way to take out these nasties in style, and you'll find yourself chuckling like a psychopath as you pin them by their skulls to walls. The Oriental Castle features armour-clad knights and armless skeletons, and it'll make good use of your weaponry, including the new lightning gun. Watch out for the fireworks!

## BLACK MIRROR

**DVD Pub:** GMX  
**Dev:** Future Games

Ah, the old point-and-click adventure game. Given the last rites by most, it's still kicking, if a bit feebly in the form of the *Black Mirror*. This demo – containing the not-as-good-as-it-sounds 'Afternoon In Wales' section – kicks off with an inventory that reads like a 'My First Adventure Kit': tough wire, a bottle of water, some broken glass, some glue, a piece of parchment and a chess piece.

Left-clicking on the mouse moves you about the screen, and right-clicking lets you take a closer look at objects and activates certain items. There's only four screens on offer, but, as ever in these games, it'll take you a good while to figure out the elusive combination of objects required to move on.



**Here's one for House Doctor.**



**About as tidy as ZONE HQ.**

## JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING

**DVD Pub:** NovaLogic **Dev:** NovaLogic

The latest contender for *Battlefield* 1942's online crown is this tropical offering from NovaLogic, where you can choose to fight on the side of the Rebels or the Joint Ops. There are loads of vehicles littered about the landscape (19 in fact), but be prepared to share as vehicles disappear rapidly and transport is in big demand. From armoured

personnel carriers to high-speed dinghies and attack helicopters, the choice is impressive and offers you plenty of options – sneak in by sea, or dump your chopper on their heads. If you're not feeling so brave, you can always choose to stay back and defend your own base using the military hardware stationed there.



**My, that's a big chopper.**



**"You first." "No, you..."**

**ALSO ON THE DVD...** ALL THE LATEST PATCHES, PLUS MOVIES OF *WORLD OF WARCRAFT*, *EVERQUEST 2*, *LOTR: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH* AND *RAG DOLL KUNG FU*, THIS MONTH'S FEATURED MODS (P110 & 111), THE *BATTLEFIELD* MAP EDITOR, A NEW *VIETCONG* MAP, AN EXTRA *BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM* MAP, *THE LORDS OF THE REALM III* CASTLE EDITOR, A HUGE *URU* ADD-ON AND *FIFA 2004* CREATION CENTRE. PLUS, MODS OF THE MONTH – *EVE OF DESTRUCTION*, *ACTION HALF-LIFE*, *GIANTS*, *THE DARKEST DAY* AND *ZODIAC* (PARTS ONE AND TWO).





The bloody, epic battles were to become a hallmark of the *Total War* series.



Looking back, castle battles were a bit crap.



Get up you pansies, it's just a scratch...



ON THE DVD

GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

# SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

Command thousands of samurai. Unite a nation. Kill a warlord on his porcelain throne... *Martin Korda* rekindles his love for a strategy masterpiece

## PROFILES

Tim Ansell and Mike Simpson were the driving forces behind *Shogun*, with Tim first putting forward the idea of moving the game into 3D and Mike bringing in a host of experience gained from over 60 previous development projects. Meet the dream team...



**NAME** Tim Ansell  
**ROLE ON SHOGUN** CEO, project manager, programmer  
**WHERE IS HE NOW?**

Running the show at The CA, working on *Rome: Total War* and at least one unannounced project.



**NAME** Mike Simpson  
**ROLE ON SHOGUN** Development director, project manager, programmer  
**WHERE IS HE NOW?**

Working with Tim on *Rome: Total War*.

**IT'S 1997** and *Command & Conquer* fever is at its height. Vastly inferior rip-offs hit the shelves on an almost weekly basis, milking a frenzied gaming public for all it's worth. Meanwhile, a small, virtually unknown outfit called The Creative Assembly is happily porting sports games for publishing giant EA. Or, as you're about to find out, not so happily at all.

"We'd seen the first C&C clones come out and do quite well, so we thought to ourselves, 'that's got to be easy to do'," explains Tim Ansell, founder, owner and CEO of The Creative Assembly. "We'd seen this one C&C clone called *KKND* (*Krush, Kill 'N' Destroy*) and it was an absolute pile of crap. Then we heard it'd sold 600,000 units. At this point I went mad – there we were busting our balls porting

sports games for EA and only selling around 100,000 units, while this crap was selling 600,000. So we decided we'd do our own upmarket clone."

And so the idea for *Shogun: Total War* was born, a basic run-of-the-mill RTS in which your goal was to conquer all and become shogun of all Japan. Needless to say, things didn't quite go according to plan.

### SMALL ACORNS

It's hard to believe that the initial vision for what would eventually become the world's most exciting and groundbreaking RTS was such a modest product. "We were originally aiming to make *Shogun* a B-title, which would sell around 250,000 units. We started off with an 18-month development plan and a small budget, but at each stage it

looked better and better. By the time the game was finished, it'd turned into a three-year project," reflects Tim.

Mike Simpson, senior producer at CA and an 18-year veteran of games development, picks up the story. "When we started the project, it was a top-down strategy game. 3D graphics weren't possible at the time as there weren't any 3D cards around back then. The major difference with our game was that it had large numbers of men, rather than just a few dozen like most of the C&C clones. We started off the development process by making some mock-ups of 'troop flocking' with tiny little men watched from a top-down perspective. At that time, there were hundreds rather than thousands in each battle. In retrospect, it looked pretty cool."





**GAME** Shogun: Total War

**DEVELOPER** The Creative Assembly

**PUBLISHER** EA

**RELEASED** 2000

**INFLUENCED** *Shogun* showed the world that the future of the RTS genre lay in the third, rather than the second dimension. Since then, no game has matched it for sheer scope and magnitude, but several have borrowed heavily from its ideas, including *Warrior Kings* and *Rise Of Nations*.



## UNDER THE HOOD

### A SHOGUN IS NOTHING WITHOUT HIS CUTTING-EDGE GRAPHICS ENGINE

Risky new gameplay ideas are one thing, but *Shogun*'s success would never have been possible without the technology to implement them. The engine sculpted by The Creative Assembly was way ahead of the curve at the time and its capabilities had a huge impact on the game's character.

"Technology really counts," agrees CEO Tim Ansell. "So many developers try to tell you how big and clever their technology is, but in *Shogun*'s case, the technology made the gameplay. You need that technology to enable that experience and viewpoint, an engine that means you can view the game from the ground up. This is why we now find ourselves with a huge advantage: *Shogun* was born at the start of the 3D era and other RTS games that were born in the 2D era are stuffed."

His words may sound supercilious, especially to rival developers. However, looking at the gulf between the forthcoming *Rome: Total War* and the rest of the pack, it's hard not to agree with the man.

But it was the advent of the 3DFX card that was to change not only the direction of the game, but also the face of RTS gaming forever. "When the first 3D cards came out, Tim suggested tilting the camera down and putting in a General's Eye view," explains Mike. "The lead programmer said it would be impossible to generate those kinds of 3D landscapes, but we tried it anyway and it proved to be possible after all."

The General's Eye view was an idea taken from the *Waterloo* games (part of Talonsoft's *Battleground* series), which enabled you to switch between a top-down 2D perspective and a 3D viewpoint. So, while *Shogun* was to prove hugely innovative in the long run, it certainly wasn't without its influences. "The problem with these games was that it took about 15 seconds for each frame of animation to come up on screen," laughs Mike. "And there weren't any individual men, just hexagonal blocks to represent formations. But we liked the concept and knew it could work for *Shogun*."

### UNDER THE INFLUENCE

However, as any *Total War* fan will tell you, *Shogun* and its offspring are games of two halves, with a 2D strategic map complementing the epic real-time battles. Present from the project's inception, this *Risk*-style campaign map provided a new dimension to the RTS genre, while enabling turn-based fans to indulge their love of troop accumulation, movement and resource gathering too. Part of the fun of *Shogun* is that it can be played entirely from this perspective, with battles being auto-resolved by the computer.



When cavalry charge, you'd better get out of the way.



Thousands of troops meant thousands of deaths.



Epic 3D battles with zillions of troops? They said it couldn't be done.

The influence for this came from one of Mike's earliest projects, 1988's *Lords Of The Rising Sun*, an action/strategy game which, blocky visuals aside, bears an uncanny resemblance to *Shogun*. "*Lords Of The Rising Sun* was set in the same time period as *Shogun* and had a separation between turn-based strategy and real-time battles," says Mike. *Shogun* essentially followed the same template, the key difference being a vast leap in technical accomplishment.

In part, it was this combination of battlefield carnage and political strategy that inspired the game's '*Total War*' subtitle. However, as the game's ambition grew, the words took on a greater significance for the developers. "I think the *Total War* aspect is very important," says Mike. "We didn't set out to just try and simulate lifelike battles in *Shogun*, but the whole political and economic situation too. People had never tried to do anything like that in a way that was remotely realistic. *Shogun*'s game mechanics were purely based on the real world. Because the mechanics were all real-life mechanics, it made it that much more intuitive to play."

Certainly, *Shogun* was the first RTS to reflect a variety of real-life tactical possibilities. It was the first RTS to implement terrain advantage, dynamic weather effects, troop morale and fatigue, and its combat mechanics

were based on Sun Tzu's *The Art Of War*. All this is in stark opposition to the glut of isometric RTS titles that clogged the shelves at the time, which were more akin to a schoolyard brawl than a real battlefield. "In a sci-fi game, it's not immediately obvious that an XP32 gun is really effective against a type four droid," explains Tim. "Whereas in *Shogun*, it was intuitively obvious that charging your cavalry up a hill at spearmen was a bad idea."

### CROP DUSTING

Another key aspect of the game mechanics was a move away from real-time resource gathering, a risky proposition at a time when the C&C model was shifting copies in the thousands. For Mike, this decision was all about realism. "Real-time resource management as done in C&C is unrealistic and didn't fit in with the whole *Total War* theme. Not having real-time resource management seemed like the natural thing to do. When you're planning a war, you spend months and years getting ready for it and then have a battle – something C&C didn't allow you to do."

Mike and Tim's passion for realism was also fuelled by the game's feudal Japanese theme, a subject they both find as shocking as they do fascinating. The more they researched the period and culture, the more they were motivated to reproduce it, often with

hilarious results. "We tried to make the game as historically accurate as possible, but fun at the same time. My favourite true story from *Shogun* was the one about the ninja who hid in a toilet for a week, then killed his target with a sword up the jacksie when he went for a dump. Then there was the time a general chopped off his own head in the middle of a battle. Things like that actually happened," Tim laughs. "We just loved the whole Japanese content. They were completely barking mad."

### SMOOTH SLAYING

With every boundary-busting vision there are obstacles to be climbed – yet surprisingly, *Shogun*'s development proved anything but problematic. Mike remembers the process well. "We didn't encounter any major problems – what we encountered was opportunity."

Tim, whose idea it was to move the game into 3D (despite claims that it was 'impossible' from many of his team), also has fond memories of the three-year project.

"We kept exceeding our own expectations. When we first submitted the idea of the 'troop flocking' system, we weren't sure if we could do it. But what we ended up with was far better than what we'd mocked up originally. We kept on aiming high and because it was such an organic process, we never sat down and had visions of the exact end product. We got there by increment. Each time we did one thing better, we realised we could do something else better too and then we got some more time and money to do it. We just kept seeing opportunities."



Orange is sooo her colour...

**"It was the advent of the 3DFX card that changed the direction of the game and the face of RTS gaming forever"**





Terrain advantage, morale and fatigue played a huge part in a battle's outcome.

TYPE	LEADER	HONOUR GAINED	HEADS TAKEN	MEN LOST
SAMURAI ARCHERS	TAKAHASHI YOSHITSUNA	0	3	0 120
SAMURAI ARCHERS	ICHUO NOBUKANE	0	6	1 119
SAMURAI ARCHERS	TAKAHASHI IEHISA	0	26	29 91
SAMURAI ARCHERS	ICHUO TADEMUNE	0	0	0 120
NAGINATA	ICHUO SUKEMUNE	0	75	9 111
NAGINATA	SHIMA MITSURIDE	0	8	22 98
WARRIOR MONKS	MIYOSHI MICHIOKA	0	86	10 110
WARRIOR MONKS	MIYOSHI SADAYORI	0	45	1 119
WARRIOR MONKS	MATSUBARA HARUHISA	0	142	17 103
WARRIOR MONKS	MIYOSHI SOUN	0	106	67 83
SAMURAI ARCHERS	CHOSOKABE SHIGEHARU	0	15	8 112
SAMURAI ARCHERS	SHIMA NOBUO	0	25	0 120
SAMURAI ARCHERS	CHOSOKABE HIROMASA	0	21	17 103
WARRIOR MONKS	SUZUKI YOSHITOSHI	0	413	46 74
NO-DACHI SAMURAI	IKOMA KAGITAKE	0	11	2 118
WARRIOR MONKS	MATSUBARA YOSHIAKIRA	-9	335	120 0
			1347	349 157

Detailed stats showed how well (or badly) you'd fared after each battle.

Despite The Creative Assembly's confidence, it wasn't until *Shogun* was first unveiled to the public at the 1998 ECTS trade show that Tim knew his team was on to a winner.

"We started to get positive outside feedback about *Shogun* at its first ECTS. If you're doing something different, it's not until you start to get outside reaction, in particular from the press, that you can be 100 per cent sure that people will like what you're doing – even if you think it's good. *Shogun*'s public debut went down a storm and from that point onwards we were confident it would be successful."

#### THE FINAL PUSH

After three years of hard graft, constant reappraising and the consumption of two tons of Chinese food, *Shogun* was released to an expectant gaming public and rapacious press at the start of 2000. The reception was overwhelmingly positive, with critics and consumers alike lavishing it with praise and heralding it as 'the game that would change the face of strategy gaming forever'.

Never one for false modesty, Tim Ansell can't help but agree: "*Shogun* blazed the trail for the future of RTS gaming. It was very highly critically acclaimed, even if it didn't set the world alight in terms of sales, but it was still

up there with the big guns. I think we kind of snuck up on the opposition and they were left wondering what they were going to do. Everyone had these traditional 2D RTS games in development, but even when they started to put them into 3D they still had the same kind of gameplay, only with 3D graphics."

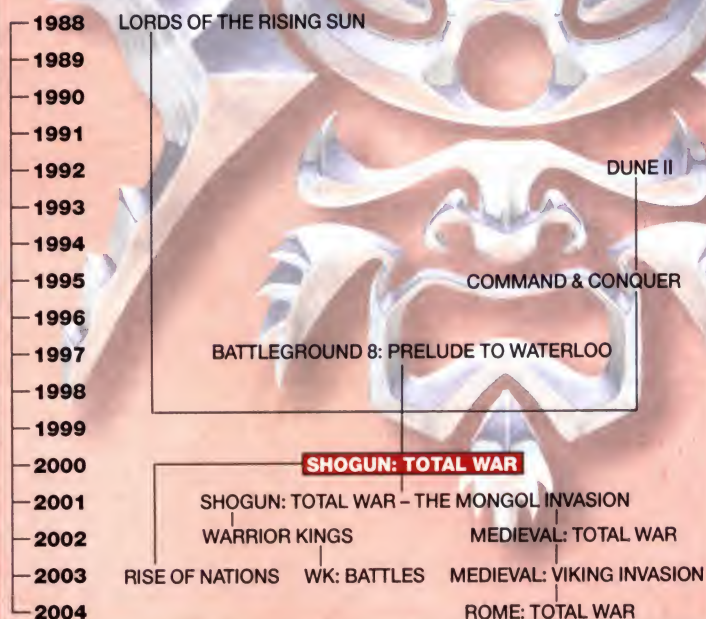
Mike couldn't agree more. "I think that when we started this, everyone else was working towards RTS games with smaller groups of units. With *Shogun*, we went in completely the opposite direction."

#### WAR ISN'T EVERYTHING

Needless to say, *Shogun* shifted more than enough copies to warrant further investment in the *Total War* series, starting off with the excellent *Mongol Invasion* expansion pack, which pitted the samurai in a theoretical war against the all-conquering Mongols.

## AN HONOURABLE FAMILY TREE

Since its release four years ago, no other game has managed to capture the sheer scope, beauty and tactical diversity of *Shogun* – apart from its sequels of course. However, some have managed to pull off aspects of *Shogun* fairly successfully, be it epic battles (*Warrior Kings* and *Warrior Kings: Battles*) or an excellent strategic campaign map (*Rise Of Nations*).



But it wasn't until the release of *Medieval* that the *Total War* series really hit the big time. To date, the sequel has shipped well in excess of a million copies worldwide and won a BAFTA award for Jeff van Dyck's evocative soundtrack. And with the third instalment, *Rome: Total War*, just a few months from completion and already a star of its own TV show, BBC 2's *Time Commanders*, The CA's stranglehold over the RTS genre looks set to continue for a long time to come.

"We've got loads of things we can do and loads of history to do it with," enthuses Tim. "We find ourselves with an embarrassment of choice. There are

a number of ways in which we can push the technology forward and we'll always continue to do that. It's our intention that if anybody ever beats one of our engines, it's us. After that, it's just a question of working out what content to put in."

The future of the *Total War* series is clearly secure – and to think, it's all thanks to the success of a sub-standard isometric *Command & Conquer* rip-off that infuriated a frustrated game company into action. God bless you *KKND*: you may have been a shit game, but without you, we may well still be stuck in isometric RTS hell to this very day. [X]

**"We didn't really encounter any major problems in the development. What we encountered was opportunity"**

MIKE SIMPSON THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY







# THE LIONHEAD DIARIES

Feeding the 5,000? Water into wine? That's child's play – *Black & White 2* is a true miracle-maker, explains **John McLean-Foreman**



## EARTH-QUAKES

that rip and fracture through the landscape, swallowing everything in their path; and mountainous

volcanoes that erupt from the earth, vomiting molten lava with devastating effect, bending time and space to my will. These are not the powers of a mere parlour magician, but those of a god. That's what I am, and that's what you'll be when you enter the world of *Black & White 2*.

As I've mentioned before, in the first *B&W* you never felt like a god – you just felt like a bit of an errand boy that could cast the odd Miracle or two. What drives us now is thoughts like: "Yes! I am a god! I want to do enormous godlike things!" The idea is to think of the best possible miracles and make them come to life.

## IN THE NAME OF GOD

For example, lead artist Neil came up with the most impressive volcano you can imagine. "Pompeii was a lukewarm fart compared to this erupting monster," he told me. And once the concept is there, the physics have to be created to make it work. That means rewriting all the technology from scratch so that the miracles like the Volcano not only interact with buildings, people, Creatures, forests and so on, but can also completely alter the landscape in any manner you see fit.

**"The idea is to think of the best ever miracles and make them come to life"**

**JOHN MCLEAN-FOREMAN** FICTION WRITER, LIONHEAD

An entirely new editing tool was written for this, hopefully powerful and useful enough to even make it available to the public when we release the game.

Something we really liked in the first game was allowing you to experiment and



**You may well need another miracle to escape from this.**

do what you wanted. This is something we're going to take further in the miracles in *B&W2*. Imagine the Fireball from the first game. Instead of just tossing them, you can now hide them in traps, place them in your siege weapons and roll them up to the gates of enemy towns.

Alternatively, if you're a more defensive player, you can squeeze them between your fingers and pour magma wherever you wish in whatever pattern best suits your needs. Thanks to the advanced liquid physics we created, magma will roll down hills, scorching new paths in the earth, filling gullies and setting everything alight. You can encircle enemy troops in a

Creature belonging to Jonty (head of *B&W Studios*): when it first encountered squeezable magma, it spilt it over its feet and had to race off to find water to cool itself down!

As well as these everyday miracles, there are the ones powered by the Epic Wonders, which change the balance of power in warfare. In one recent game, a swarming army of the berserk Norse charged into a valley, only to be totally wiped out in a couple of seconds. Which miracle did that? I'll leave you guessing...

## MIRACLE-MAKERS

Like so many elements of *Black & White 2*, I'm staggered at the amount of work which goes into developing each miracle – no part of the game goes untouched. No wonder there are two artists (Imi and Neil), two game/3D programmers (Adam L and Adam C) and a 3D programmer (Mark) working on miracles almost exclusively.

Mark's job is to bend the rules, to grapple with the most difficult and unexpected 3D problems that the miracles team encounters, creating effects that aren't provided by the general



**In *Black & White 2*, you can decide what Miracles to use and when.**

miracles effects code. He boasted that he'd created a blizzard with thousands of uniquely-shaped snowflakes (why we would need each snowflake to look different from the next, I have no idea, but that's the sort of thing he does).

Also, because we need the game to realistically react to a cyclone of wind, lightning and torrential rain touching down in the middle of a populated city, Mark is the man who works out how to do that without slowing down the program.

## YUM YUM

While most of our Epic miracles have a very specific area of effect, the most destructive and evil one in the game will consume an entire island. Adam C is the man designing this one, and when I asked him about it, his face lit up with mischievous glee. "Basically, when this thing kicks off, everything is doomed – and I mean everything. There's no way you're getting out of the way, so you might as well sit back and enjoy the ensuing apocalypse." Rather disturbing really. This Epic effect hungers for energy, sensing different concentrations of life and then surging into those areas and feeding on everything until the whole island has been destroyed. And it all sprang from the darker recess of Adam's mind.

Adam L developed the tool that allows the artists to instantly create new special effects. So, instead of special effects being made by our programmers in code, the people who've spent years honing their artistic talents now have complete control. The tool is used for all the frequently used miracles such as the Fireball, Decay, Flamethrower, Heal, Lightning, Invisibility, Water Spout, Freeze and Shield. The Creature, of course, needs to be able to use all of these spells as well, but it sometimes has difficulty understanding how they work. One example is the Cow: while trying to water crops, it ended up with a water cannon and sprayed people down the town's high street and into the countryside!

Imi, like Adam L, works with the everyday miracles and special effects, but from an artistic viewpoint. Using the visual effect editor, Imi can add weight, colour, consistency and so on to whatever needs it. So when your Creature gets sick and shakes its head around, spraying its vomit in all directions, you know who to blame. [E]



**"Thunder, lightning, the way you love me is frightening..."**



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REAR VIEW

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# RETRO ZONE

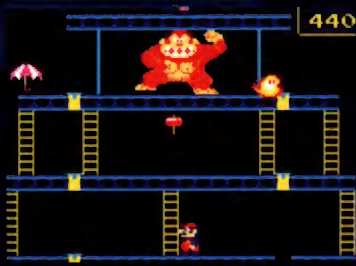
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## DONKEY KONG

US goes ape for Nintendo monkey magic

**SOME** games introduce enduring characters, others change the fortunes of the developer forever. For Nintendo, however, *Donkey Kong* wasn't just the money-spinning debut for its future mascot Mario and the springboard for world domination in the late 1980s and early '90s – it was also the game that would introduce the world to a far more prominent legend, that of Shigeru Miyamoto.

The story behind the game started in 1980. Nintendo wanted to break into the lucrative US videogame market, but its first release *Radarscope* – a competent twist on the *Invaders* theme – didn't go down well, selling only 1,000 coin-ops. Unwilling to write off the 2,000 machines left gathering dust in the warehouse, Nintendo Japan entrusted a young graphics artist to create a game that would make use of the existing hardware. The result, of course,



Get the hammer, Mario? The hammer!

was *Donkey Kong*, the game that introduced Mario as 'Jumpman', his girlfriend Pauline and the eponymous kidnapper Kong.

Upon receiving the replacement circuit boards, the beleaguered and despondent bosses of Nintendo America (NOA) feared the game would not sell to a market seemingly keen on alien bashing. Fearing the worst, the company installed a test machine in a



The scariest pre-*Far Cry* monkey.

shipping 250 machines a day. In total, *Donkey Kong* netted \$100 million for the company and brought the kings of the industry, Atari and Mattel, banging on Nintendo's door to license the game for their home consoles. Barring the matter of a looming legal battle over the

**"Donkey Kong netted \$100 million for Nintendo and brought Atari and Mattel banging on its door"**

local bar close to its Seattle office and over the course of three nights discovered the machine had netted over \$100 – a tidy sum.

Within a few months, the 2,000 old *Radarscope* machines had been converted and sold and Nintendo was

infringement of the King Kong trademark, Nintendo had broken America and within a few short years would control 80 per cent of the world video game market. And it won the court battle, of course.

RETRO  
ZONE

AUGUST  
1981

The first PC hits the shops and Depeche Mode have their first chart hit. *Richie Shoemaker* ponders the month that changed his life



Mario was originally a carpenter.

### NEWSFLASH

IT'S AUGUST 1981 AND...

- The first PC hits the streets. The IBM Personal Computer comes in many flavours, the cheapest of which sets punters back over £1,500 and comes with a standard 64K memory, 5-inch floppy drive and a processor running at 4.77MHz. By the end of the year, IBM would sell over 65,000 PCs.
- More significantly, electronics giant GCE licenses the Vectrex console. Much loved and now highly collectable, the Vectrex was the first and only vector graphics console.
- In related news, Atari announces the first colour vector graphics game. Originally intended as a 3D version of *Space Invaders*, the game is called *Tempest*.
- Apple responds to the release of the PC by running an ad in *The Wall Street Journal* which reads: 'Welcome IBM. Seriously.'
- And finally, this was the month that saw Texas Instruments release *Teach Yourself Extended Basic* for its TI-99/4a computer. (Look, game news was slow back then, OK?)

### THE BEST OF THE REST



#### FROGGER

(Arcade)

Created by Konami (famous for *Metal Gear Solid*), *Frogger* was licensed to a small Japanese company called Sega and was its first major hit. The popularity of Kermit The Frog helped, not to mention the Green Cross Code ads, but without this amphibian hero we might never have been able to enjoy Sega's other animal champions: Sonic, Ecco or those rather super monkeys.



#### POPEYE

(Game & Watch)

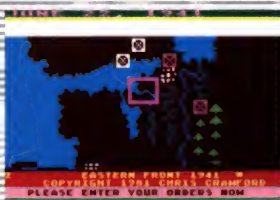
It may have taken a few years to crack the coin-op and console markets, but with mobile gaming, Nintendo has always been in charge. Prior to the Gameboy, Game & Watch was the best way to while away an Inter City train journey without breaking the law. Of course, the watch was useless, but there was enough gameplay to keep us going until we got home to our ZX81s.



#### ADVENTURE

(PC)

There's nothing worse than spending a year's wages on a PC only to find there are no games for it. For PC gamers back in August '81, there was nothing except this port of the classic mainframe game *Colossal Cave*. *Adventure* was Microsoft's first commercial game release and also the first entertainment title for the PC – closely followed by *Microsoft Flight Simulator v1.0*.



#### EASTERN FRONT - 1941

(Atari 400/800)

Realism, devious AI, realistic weather – this game had them all, as well as (wait for it), a scrolling map screen. OK, so it was a turn-based wargame, but it was the first that could offer a decent challenge, seeing as the longer you took to make your move, the longer the AI had to perfect its strategy. As a result, *Eastern Front* remained the benchmark for wargames for years after.





File Edit View Tools Message Help

From: mikell3@inline-cinema.com

Date: 30/03/04

To: jkatznbagr@dreamweaver\_films.net

Subject: Prince of Persia Movie - Urgent!

Jeff,  
Kudos on netting the POP licence! It's gonna be big. All the boys here smell money on this one! Studio had a coupla suggestions, just hear them out. The youth dollar is our Al target right now. We're thinking cross-market merchandising, TV audience tie-in, family appeal with enough street to keep the cred high. Attached is an early poster idea. Like the urban angle. Buzz round here is through the roof. Lunch soon.

M

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DUNGEON IS WHERE HE  
SPENT MOST OF HIS DAYS...

**WILL SMITH**

IS THE

**FRESH  
PRINCE  
OF  
PERSIA**



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Paul Dross, News Of The Globe

"The BEST film ever MADE!!!"  
Harry Knowall, It Ain't Cool News

"Full of Turkish delight"  
Bob Cliché, Total Movies

INLINE CINEMA PRESENTS A DREAMWEAVER FILMS PRODUCTION WILL SMITH "THE FRESH PRINCE OF PERSIA" ALSO STARRING  
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MUSIC BY BON TEMPI COSTUME DESIGNER STAN'S FANCY THREADS EDITOR SNIP CUTTER DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY LEN SCRATCHING  
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